The Thesis Committee for Pablo D. Montes
Certifies that this is the approved version of the following Thesis:

Dejando mi Hogar, Llegue a Casa: (Re)Migratory Processes, (Un)Diasporic Subjectivities, and Indigenous Cosmologies of Homecoming

APPROVED BY
SUPERVISING COMMITTEE:

Luis Urrieta Jr., Supervisor

Noah De Lissovoy

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by

Pablo D. Montes

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Dedication

Ometeotl. I dedicate this work specifically for my parents, Manuel and Maria Montes, and my sisters, Ana and Andrea Montes. The other day my dad told me “Gracias por dejarme ser to Padre”. Thank you, thank you, thank you, Creator for blessing me with such a beautiful family. With parents who are magic. An older sister for paving the higher education road without realizing. A younger sister for demonstrating the resilience of a warrior. I am blessed, humbled, and filled with pure love, to have been gifted this family, these ancestors, and these legacies. Tlazocamati.

Acknowledgements

I want to take this time to acknowledgement and give gratitude for all those who have shaped, one way or another, the trajectory of my personal and academic endeavors. Again, thank you ama y apa, my beautiful sisters for blessing me with your love and light. To Dr. Luis Urrieta Jr. and Dr. De Lissovoy for being patient with me, pushing me towards a more critical understanding of education, and for also listening to some of my crazy ideas. Thank you to the lands on which I reside for allowing me to visit you in this beautiful way, as I know that I am a guest. For the Elders and caretakers of central Texas who have opened their home to a wondering soul, thank you Dr. Mario Garza and Maria Rocha of the Maikan/Garza Band. Gracias Yana Wana for seeing a lost boy when you first met me, and guiding me back to your waters to unravel the gift of reconnecting with a part of myself that laid dormant. The International Indigenous Youth Council – Texas and the national one, for allowing us youth to do the work we envision for our communities, our people, and the future generations. To all my beautiful friends who have invited me with such kindness and warmth since I made that big move to Austin: Griselda Madrigal, Seiri Aragon, Luis Maldonado, Maria Reza, Marleen Villanueva, Jose Gomez, Brianna Orta, Maribel Falcon, Alma Buena, Elena Perez, and Mario Ramirez. For the spiritual leaders I have had the privildge of meeting: Freddy, Yolanda, Thomas, Elo, Evelio, and Nana Cleo. I am filled with nothing but infinite gratitude. Thank you.

Abstract

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Pablo D. Montes, MA

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Supervisor: Luis Urrieta Jr., Noah De Lissovoy

Through an autoethnographic approach, this research will aim to elucidate the conceptualizations of an (un)diasporic subjectivity in relation to (re)migration, home(coming), and indigenous and native-centered reclamations of knowing and being. In addition, sexuality, as an axis of power, will be a centralized tenet to further nuance how a queer de-indigenized (and racialized) body, upon a diasporic contingency, is constructed, contested, and crystallized through this act of critical self-reflexive ontology. Traveling back to my hometown of La Luz, Guanajuato, Mexico, and my travel from Wisconsin to Texas to pursue graduate school a year ago will provide the sociogeographic locale of this study. I believe that incorporating an understanding of said (re)migratory processes upon the conditions of (un)diasporic subjectivities, will triangulate further our notions of what it means to return home (metaphysically as well as physically). Through memories, life stories, consejos, dreams, journaling, and critical

reflections, I venture into this autoethnographic venture. Ultimately, this project hopes to contribute to the growing literature of indigenous and native centered pedagogies and curriculum. Specifically, in what ways can curriculum and pedagogies address these contingent subjectivities through the deployment of social studies, for example, and introducing ideas of deconstructive identity politics in regards to displaced ideas of indigenous and native ancestral knowledge, legacies, geographies, and ethnoscapes. Autoethnography, as a research methodology, may then provide avenues for students to traverse often restrictive curricular hegemonies by incorporating these experiences and unfolding the multiplicity of nuances in their epistemic and ontological orientations. So, in what ways can curriculum and pedagogies address these contingent subjectivities and introduce ideas of deconstructive identity politics regarding displaced ideas of indigenous and native ancestral knowledge, legacies, geographies, and ethnoscapes?

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CHAPTER I

Introduction and Acknowledgements

Yo Manam. With the permission of these lands, of the sacred guardians of this place, and the hearts of all those present, I introduce myself to all of you as Pablo Montes. Today I give thanks to you creator, for blessing me with all that I have. For my feet, my arms, my health, my parents, my family, my heart, my laugh, my friends, my love. I recognize and acknowledge that I am a visitor here today on these lands and hope to learn, become, and give back alongside the original caretakers. Thank you Dr. Mario Garza and Maria Rocha of the Miakan/Garza band, the Coahuiltecan People of central Texas, and the many other Indigenous and Native peoples to these sacred places. I thank you for being patient with me, for allowing me to learn alongside of you, and to continue to realize that work we are doing and hope to do, is for our communities, our loved ones, and those younger people. For the generations who are yet to come. Thank you Yana Wana for welcoming me back to these lands that I first met back in 2013. I felt a call from you for years and now realize that I am in the right place at the right time. Thank you ancestors for keeping our spirit alive. You prayed for me that one day I could be here, breathing, laughing, and smiling for all of you. I know that I am filled with generations of wisdom, care, and resilience. Lastly, but truly, I give thanks to you my beautiful parents and sisters. You cannot imagine how proud I am of all of you, of all the work that you have done and continue to do. You are my greatest dreams come true. To know that a family like this, was gifted to me from creator, seems like magic to me. I

hope that my work reflects a little bit of my infinite gratitude for all of you. All of this is for you and will always be so.

I start with this acknowledgement, because this is how it must always start. As Robin Kimmerer (2013) mentions in her book *Braiding Sweetgrass,* I have so much to be thankful for. In the thanksgiving address that she narrates, she describes that we are always eager to cut to the chase, get to the point, and not waste time. However, when we sit back and realize all the gifts that we have before us, the many things creator has blessed us with, we begin to realize that giving thanks and gratitude is not only an action to do, but a lesson to acknowledge. So that is why I start my entire project with my gratitude and by giving thanks, because without these gifts in my life, I would not be able to do what I am doing today with you.

This project came about in a rather interesting way. I realized that before I did ethnographic work, I noticed that first I had to reflect upon myself, refract upon my experiences, defract upon my contexts. This thesis is rooted in my personal experiences, as well as a collective familial experience, of (re)migration, diasporas, epistemologies, and indigenous ways of knowing and being. The interest that guided this research circles back to the idea of migratory processes that places families in a sociopolitical and geoemotional diasporic contingency. However, children often times (re)migrate and physically create a (un)diasporic phenomenon. In other words, the ways in which families migrate from their respective physical lands (i.e. Mexico) to places which seem to be distant from their places of origin. These processes of migrations, diasporas, and homecomings create an interesting epistemological and ontological space that caters to a

different understandings of oneself in relation context, place, and community. Being a person who was born in Wisconsin, from Mexican migrants, caters to a intricate way that one sees the world Wisconsin sociopolitically and geohistorically has not necessarily been a land that inhabits my family's ancestral legacies and memories, however, *my family's* legacies and memories have been shaped by being placed in this diasporic condition. My families funds of knowledge, albeit physically displaced from their origin, allowed me to question the ways in which migratory processes may hold imperative canons of knowledge in regards to moving and migrating *back* to particular lands and places.

I believe that this calls for an interesting conversation on how (re)migratory processes may hold pivotal intersections of epistemological and ontological contributions to the conversations of diasporic conditions, borderland theories, migrations, and Indigenous and Native cosmologies of homecoming. Ultimately, this project hopes to contribute to the growing literature of Indigenous and Native centered pedagogies and curriculum. I believe that in incorporating an understanding of said (re)migratory processes upon the conditions of (un)diasporic subjectivities, I hope to see how we can use experiences as the one I have mentioned to push further our notions of what it means to return home (metaphysical as well as physical). Specifically, in what ways can curriculum and pedagogies address these contingent subjectivities through the deployment of social studies, for example, and introducing ideas of deconstructive identity politics in regards to displaced ideas of Indigenous and Native ancestral knowledge, legacies, geographies, and ethnoscapes. By unraveling the intricacies of these

journeys, I hope to elucidate how educative decolonial ventures in curriculum and pedagogy can draw from these funds of knowledge to further complicate, while also enlighten, conversations of Indigenous and Native epistemologies within education. In particular, what can we take away from these processes? Can these processes of homecoming, migrations, and diasporic movements be incorporated in curricular and pedagogical ventures? How can education, educators, and schooling (re)imagine these contingencies and percarities in often hostile, hyper surveilled, and static educative spaces? Can it be done?

Additionally this project also takes into account the way in which these conversations have been contemporarily formulated in recent years. Chapter IV delineates one of these movements, the resurfacing of the "x" in many Spanish lexicons and discourses. The reason to include this particular conversation within the broader discourses of diasporas, homecoming, and migrations, is precisely due to the way that this movement has garnered support, and opposition, in relation to people (re)imagining particular subjectivities about themselves through a seemingly simple endeavor as saying Latinx instead of Latina/o. As I deploy the "x" throughout my writing, a needed contextualization of this conversation is necessary, as the "x" has a rather interesting sociohistorical and ethnopolitical trajectory throughout its deployment in the last two decades. Through these contextual conversations, I outline and situate the reason why such nuances are imperative in demonstrating how particular subjectivities are often in contention yet reconstituted through processes of migrations, diasporas, and homecomings. You will also notice that the writing style, method, and format of this

chapter is juxtaposed with the following Chapter V. This divergence of style is purposeful and imperative to acknowledge. As in Chapter IV I am called to present the work in that way as I would not know how to approach this in a "post-qualitative" manner. The following Chapter V, I let those doubts and worries dissolve into the page, between the words, and outside the peripheries. The process and transition of Chapter IV and Chapter V, help to delineate the power yet utility of both research endeavors, yet serve very specific purposes.

I go forth with this project in an attempt to enter this conversation in the best way. I deploy an autoethnographic method, alongside *Thinking with Theory* (Jackson and Mazzei, 2012) and *Listening to Images* (Campt, 2017), and with the theoretical underpinnings of Refusal and Desire (Tuck and Yang, 2014; Simpson, 2016; McGranahan, 2016) as well as Futurities (Campt, 2017)[1]. I particularly am interested in these inquiries as they allow me to grapple with the subtleties and multiplicities in creative and nontraditional qualitative ways. For this reason, the formulation of this project was not liner, maybe strayed too far away, has no chronological delineation, and often times will flow in a direction that may not often make the most sense, but may be what is needed at the moment. Through the usage of dreams, pictures, critical reflections, journaling, memories, life histories, *consejos,* and creative writing, this autoethnography will present the reader with not only parts of myself, but why these parts are necessary to acknowledge in spaces such as education and schools.

[1] These theoretical and methodological inquiries will be fully discussed in Ch. III *Methods*

CHAPTER II

The Seeds That Have Been Laid

Before going forth and unpacking and unsettling certain discursive shifts, discipline particularities, and current educationally rendered positions, I draw attention to this purposefully titled section "The Seeds that Have been Laid". The texts that will be presented are positioned in parallel, in contradiction, and in relation to one another. Traditionally, this would be considered a literature review. However, I want to extend the notion that literature reviews do not always have to be so mechanical and rigid; they can be loving and critical at the same time. Paris and Alim (2014) call this a loving critique forward when revisiting their work and the potential of their work to move in different directions in a perpetually shifting global dynamic. Ladson-Billings (2014) also revisits her work in relation to Paris' first publication of culturally sustaining pedagogy, stating that his work in conjunction with hers, catalyzes the goals of culturally relevant pedagogies towards a more critically intricate cultural landscape of classrooms and teaching programs. The seeds that have been laid, (re)centers the importance of not only acknowledging the work that has lead us to our present, but how we can tend to them caringly to sprout new fruits; knowledges that have been misunderstood and cosmologies of life that are undervalued. At the same time, to see how we have been neglecting the plants' advice, as they are some of our eldest teachers and how we can plant these seeds of knowledge; they are the sweetest when tended to respectfully.

As mentioned, this project is rooted in my personal experiences, as well as a collective familial and ancestral legacies, of (re)migration, diaspora, epistemologies, and Indigenous cosmologies. The interest that guided this research circles back to the idea of migratory processes that places families in a sociopolitical and geoemotional diasporic contingency. This is further complicated when children (re)migrate and physically/emotionally/spiritually create a seemingly new (un)diasporic phenomenon. This diaspora creates an interesting epistemological and ontological space that caters to a different understanding of oneself and the structures of power in which the person is positioned. My family's funds of knowledge, albeit physically displaced from their homelands, allowed me to question the ways in which migratory processes do hold imperative canons of knowledge when conceptualizing diasporas, transnational epistemologies, and Indigenous realizations. Specifically, within the context of education and how the colonial powers of imperialism and capitalism are in constant juxtaposition with these understandings. In delineating this line of work, certain areas of scholarship need to be addressed to better complicate and accentuate how diasporas, (re)migration, and Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies are positioned or unsettled in education. Paying particular attention as to how all these sections are ultimately weaved together but also how certain pluralities within curriculum and pedagogies can work in tandem or in contention with each other.

DIASPORA, HOME(COMING), AND (RE)MIGRATIONS

To begin, this first section will briefly contextualize and explicate the intricacies of diasporas, home(coming), and (re)migrations. Diaspora, in its rudimental explication, is the "dispersal of a people from [their] original homeland" (Butler, p.189, 2001). However, since diasporas inception as a field of study, which most closely related to the dispersion of the Jewish people, diasporas have been deployed within many other subjectivities and conditionalities such as the Caribbean, Mexican, and African diasporas (Hall, 2014; Rinderle, 2005; Butler, 2001). With the rapid era of globalization, nation-state perpetual violence, forced migration and displacement, white supremacist hegemony, and colonial and imperial expansions, diasporalities have/are imperative to further complicate. As (settler) colonialites and legacies continue to have an inordinate resonance contemporarily, worldwide mass migrations have catered to particular diasporic communities "that struggle to maintain their dignity in their host countries that are sometimes hostile and exploitative" (Urrieta and Martinez, p.257, 2011). While by the same token, attempting to foster and preserve cultural identity and specificites in their children in relation to what they constitute as home, culture, and life. Additionally, Stuart Hall (2014) points us to understand how cultural identity and diaspora cohabitated a diasporic subjectivity, within the specificities of community, hemispheric, and historic imaginaries.

What Hall (2014) in *Cultural Identity and Diaspora* offers is that cultural identities are not simply situated within the construction of similarity across varied members. Specifically, he demonstrates the deeply rooted differences that necessitate the

complexity of both the situatedness and fluctuating axis' amongst people in diasporic conditionalities through what he coins "the vector of similarity and continuity; and the vector of difference and rupture" (p.226). Although Hall was specifically addressing Africannes, blackness, and Caribbean (dis)positionalites, his take on how diasporic identities "are those which are producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference" (p.235) provides keen insight on how people (re)imagine diasporas, home(comings) and their (re)migrations. For example, in Luis Urrieta's (2016) piece on diasporic community knowledge he demonstrates how both continuity and differentiability amongst diasporic communities construct intellectual cultural wealth. These *saberes* (knowings) and smartness, as he mentions, are transformed and developed through relations of familial and community life with their *pueblo,* as the students return for festivals and holidays that supplement their educational experiences in school.

Those children who go back are from that pueblo, but some may not have been born there, yet are still connected, but geophysically not, to what Hall (2014) was presenting on how many truths of diasporic communities are constant, similar, and unifying yet dislocated, liminal, and unsettled. In a sense, catering to a certain type of chaos, that "shapes our conocimientos" and "[develops] the ability to see behind the veil of the human transactions at home versus school" (Chavez, p.342, 2015). Exposure and constant immersion to these *saberes* allows an epistemic and ontological growth, such as abuelita epistemologies that carry the value-based educative model that propel the ethically and morally sound student subject (Gonzalez, 2015), that cannot be superseded by schools with subtractive policies (Valenzuela, 2010). However, very often do these

students and their parents grapple with education and school institutional forces imposing a reductive supposition that because students leave for a long period of time to see their family, for example to Mexico, that this absenteeism is validation of parental/guardian educational neglect (Urrieta and Martinez, 2011; Urrieta, 2016). What happens in this unsettled presumption is those *saberes, conocimientos, y aprendizaje,* are de-legitimized and further placed in peripheries, especially in schools, instead of (re)orientating them as actualities in these students epistemic and ontological progressions.

This brings forth the parallels and contentions of home as a concept, feeling, a lived experience, and a nostalgic presence. By looking at the works of Rinderle (2005), Butler (2001), Hall (2014), Safran (1991), Brah (2005), Urrieta (2016), Behar (2007), and Khosravi (2010), the following deliberations upon the concept of home will be unpacked yet reconstituted and reimagined through diaspora and (re)migratory processes. As diaspora studies becomes an increasingly popular field of study, many scholars have taken time to meticulously conceptualize (and operationalize) the deployment of such a phenomenon (Rinderle, 2005; Hall, 1991; Safran, 1991; Brah, 2005). Safran (1991) mentions that people in diasporic subjectivities have these six commonalities: (1) dispersal to two or more locations; (2) collective mythology of homeland; (3) alienation from hostland; (4) idealization of return to homeland; (5) commitment to the maintenance and safety of the homeland; (6) connection to the homeland that defines the diaspora's ethnocommunal consciousness and solidarity. However, as Butler (2005) mentions, there is not a universally recognized consensus on the operationalization and definition of diaspora. For example, the delineations of who is considered a diaspora from prior

sociopolitically violent conditions such as migrations, exiles, refugees, nomadics, and expatriates (Safran, 1991; Butler, 2005). What Brah (1996) helps critically reimagine with the following passage of her book *Cartographies of Diaspora:*

> At the heart of the notion of diaspora is the image of a journey. Yet, not every journey can be understood as diaspora. Diasporas are clearly not the same as casual travel. Nor do they normatively refer to temporary sojourns. Paradoxically, diasporic journeys are essentially about settling down, about putting roots "elsewhere". These journeys must be historicised if the concept of diaspora is to serve as a useful heuristic device. The question is not simply about who travels but when, how, and under what circumstances?
> What socioeconomic, political, and cultural conditions mark the trajectories of these journeys? What regimes of power inscribe the formation of a specific "Diaspora"? (p.182)

In conversation with the passage above, Rinderle (2005) provides context to the Mexican Diaspora. As she mentions that there are particularities of home, that are (re)constituted through these contingencies of where and what home is. For example, Mexican migrants in the U.S. may look to Mexico as a nation-state as the actual home in which they wish to return, much like in Urrieta's (2016) piece where family members explicitly made a travel back to their *pueblo.* U.S. born Mexican-Americans who may identify as Chicanx may wish for the return towards the mythical homeland called

Aztlan[2], or desire both (Rinderle, 2005). Others, such as Hall (2014) who is in the Caribbean and Greater/Lower Antilles diaspora, describes how the original “Africa” is no longer there; the *imagined community* of Africa, which is imperative to the Caribbean imaginary, is a place where no one can literally go home to. Additionally, scholars like Behar (2007) and Khosravi (2011), demonstrate the multiplicities of home(coming) and what spatialities they embodied through their diasporic movements and conditionalities. Specifically, how loss and longing were part of their diasporas.

For Behar (2007), the sense of loss was because of a longing to remember a Cuba she never had the opportunity to know. This sense of loss runs throughout her work as she describes that some Jewish Cubans, mostly the Yiddish-speaking Jews, referred to the island as Akshanie Kuba, or "Hotel Cuba" (Behar, 2007). The reason for this was because they believed that the real destination was America, and that Cuba was a temporary home. However, when the state of Israel was established, along with the Cuban revolution, Jewish Cubans became scattered evermore in the diaspora. An exodus of the Jews that left Cuba complicated their sense of belonging depending on where they migrated to, as some of them were stamped with a salida definitiva or "definitive departure" while others were stamped with repatriados, or "repatriated" losing their Cuban patria for their respective Jewish homeland. For Khosravi (2010), the sense of loss was intricate as his migratory status transitioned depending on the borders he transgressed. An example was his position from "illegal migrant" within Pakistan, to "asylum seeker" and "refugee" in Sweden, and eventually to an "unwanted migrant"

[2] This will be further discussed in the following sections, *Mestizaje and Detribalized Indigeneity*

within the countries he would visit. These borderlands, both real and metaphysical, garnered a loss of nation-state belonging. Even when Khosravi went back home (Iran) when his father was ill, he was met with apprehensive and perplexed family and neighbors. As he mentions, "sometimes homecoming is full of shame, rather than glory" (p.86) and that as he went home he noticed that life had construed his belonging within Iran as another border his body and spirit must traverse. Ultimately, his "exile [had] made [him] an alien in Sweden and a foreigner in Iran" (p.88). In their cases, borders and diasporic realities often catered to a loss of home, and a desire to fully comprehend how their conditions constructed their operationalization of such a concept.

Although this section does not provide a complete and holistic account of the trajectories of diaspora studies, it provides various contextualizations of how diaspora, home(coming), and (re)migration processes can/do manifest transnationally and hemispherically. Additionally, also acknowledging that these phenomenons have been/are constructed through colonial and imperialist regimes. The following section provides a more distinct onlook into what Rinderle (2005) states as the Mexican Diaspora, with a particular attention to *mestizaje* and indigeneity within these diasporic parameters.

MESTIZAJE AND DETRIBALIZED INDIGENEITY

As described in the previous section the displacement, forced migration, and violent sociopolitical conditions that most often accompanied those in diasporic subjectivities, many people had a reconfiguration of self, ontology, and subjectivity in

relation to these geographies. Rinderle (2005) provides a good example of what happens when migration processes, coupled with forced hegemonic powers, caters to people identifying in particular ways in the Mexican Diaspora (Mexican, Mexican-American, Latinx, Chicanx, and Hispanic). Through acculturative tactics, the essentialization of the indian, and the Mexican eugenics movement (Monrique, 2016), the nationally perpetuated *mestizo* and later *mestizaje* began to ideologically spread not only in Mexico, but transnationally amongst Latin America. *Mestizo* is literally translated to a hybrid, an imagined person of mixed ancestry that has roots from the American Indian, European, and African (Grande, 2000). A concept specifically maneuvered to acculturate the Indigenous populations under this state-sanctioned discourse of racial mixture and one that "embodies a historical location of racism and Indigenous erasure" (Urrieta, p.130, 2003).

This was catalyzed and expanded through the notion that *mestizos* were the products of a *raza cosmica,* a strategic ideologically accepted convention borrowed from the Mexican nationalist Vasconcelos (Rodriguez & Cuevas, 2017; Banks, 2006; Safa, 2005). Influenced from the eugenics movement, the incorporation of the Indigenous often meant an attempt to acknowledge the Indigenous populations, with no social reform or inclusion within a nationalistic Mexican narrative (Monrique, 2016); specifically, Vasconcelos and the Mexican Eugenics Society, "viewed Indigenous peoples as an object of redemption that needed to be incorporated into the nation… [and] were only accepted in this vision of the nation to the extent that they adapted to modernity and adopted the dominant way of life" (Monrique, pg.4, 2016). As *mestizaje* garnered more discursive

traction, many Chicana feminists necessitated a reenvisioning of subjectivities and critical self-reflexivity of this construct that was far more nuanced, critical, and contextualized (Castillo, 2014; Bernal, 1998). One example being, the revolutionary piece by Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) *Borderlands, la frontera: The New Mestiza, w*hich, "reinscribed the cultural terrain with the language and embodiment of mestiza consciousness… [embodying] a new feminist Chicana consciousness" (Grande, p.473, 2000) through a series of experiences that straddles "cultures, races, languages, nations, sexualities, and spiritualites" (Bernal, p. 561, 1998).

However, there has been an abundance of research that demonstrates the coercive tendencies of *mestizaje* that reify (settler) colonial and imperialist traditions; especially, to afro descendants, women, and Indigenous peoples not recognized in the lands of mythical Aztlan (Milian, 2013; Safa, 2005; Banks, 2006; Rodriguez, 1996). In its conceptualizing, *mestizaje* celebrated this racial and cultural mixture for a unification of particular nation-states through a homogenous national image, which usually came at the expense of the indian, especially women (Urrieta, 2003), and "reasserted the supremacy of the European race and civilization by favoring *blanqueamiento* or whitening" (Safa, p. 307, 2005). Rosalva Aida Hernandez Castillo (2010)[3] articulated similarly that, "during the period (Mexican nationalist period), the mestizo, symbol of the cultural and biological merging of Spanish and Indigenous peoples, or *mestizaje*, still colored the national discourse on 'The Mexican'. In this sense, Indigenous women bodies were literally

[3] Cited from Urreita's piece *Las Identidades También Lloran, Identities Also Cry: Exploring the Human Side of Indigenous Latina/o Studies*

conceived as the epicenter of the nation, from which would emerge the mestizo, who would form the cosmic race described by Jose Vascancelos" (p.27).

Even though scholars would unsettle *mestizaje* as colonial enterprise, often these conversations still meant that the third-root, the African, was also uncritically mentioned (Banks, 2006). More specifically, the invocation of *mestizaje* "has serious implications for race relations [specifically] in the United States given the growing presence and political power of Mexican Americans because substituting *mestizaje* for racial binarism when discussing race in the United States reinforces, rather than diminishes, notions of white racial superiority and dominance" (p.204). Not only does *mestizaje* pose complications and a contradiction for Latin American identifying *mestizxs,* this subversive ideology also unintentionally forced American Indians to deploy essentialisms and relatively fixed notions of identity upon their communities due to identity appropriations, cultural encroachment, and corporate commodification (Grande, 2000). "Thus, in spite of its aspirations to social justice, the notion of a new cultural democracy based on the ideal of *mestizaje* represents a rather ominous threat to American Indian communities" (p.481).

Early Chicana/o writers mention vaguely and indirectly that africanness, blackness, and shades of dark brownness are inherently imperative when discussing ancestral legacies. As Rodriguez (1996) mentions, those with Caribbean and "identifiable African roots" often express concern that mestizaje prioritizes indigeneity over blackness

(p.27)[4]. Even Anzaldúa, who is a revolutionary queer Chicana feminist, alludes to her black ancestral lineage but cuts the conversation abruptly when talking about mestizaje and the components she decides to prioritize (Anzaldúa, 1987). There has also been contested conversation where it is believed that more African peoples were in Mexico than there were peoples of European decent (Rodriguez, 1996). Romanticizing indigeneity without taking into consideration blackness and certain color lines of racialized subjectivities, can create an ideological vacuum (Milian, 2013). In other words, as blackness is excluded from ancestral reclamation the more mestizaje is placed on an Indigenous-white binary.

To further elaborate, Claudia Milian's work in *Latining America: Black-Brown Passages and the Coloring of Latino/a Studies*, offers a critical dimension on specific racializations, color line subjectivities, and brownnes in Latina/o studies. Specifically, she focuses on the neglect of African ancestral legacies and blackness within the discipline (Milian, 2013). By masking the U.S.-centric collective disposition of Latinidades with a black amnesia, the specificity needed for a more nuanced understanding of color related racialization becomes less defined. This thesis does not necessarily go into depth of these contentions, but it is still especially timely to recognize that Mexico is now including Afro-Mexicans on their national census[5] and imperative to understand the disconnect that Latinidades has with afro-ancestral genealogies, as well as critically examining the

[4] This was further flamed by Latin and Central America passing anti-black laws due to lawmakers, politicians, and public policy officials believing race mixing and the African Slave trade caused the economic and political problems in their respective countries (Hornsby, 2008).

[5] https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/mexico-finally-recognized-its-black-citizens-but-thats-just-the-beginning_us_568d2d9ce4b0c8beacf50f6b

subtleties that emerged upon this recognition within the neoliberal state. By tracing subtleties within differing color lines of Latinities, Milian presents an interesting perspective of indigeneity. Specifically, the linked chain between blackness and indianness which constitutes a rather specific color line that semantically melts into one that is brown, replacing the black for those color lines of brownness (Milian, 2013).

Milian (2013) makes a convincing point that the color lines are intimately connected with ethnoracial and cultural referentiality, with an ongoing negotiation of certain subject identity formations. For example, being associated too close to the Indian resulted in less political and social power, so Mexican immigrants had to legally defend their racialized whiteness to acquire certain legal and social benefits and had to navigate the racialized boundaries of mestizaje to apply for naturalization within the U.S. (Menchaca, 1993). As Molina (2014) describes, whiteness became a racial script because Mexicans were fighting to be recognized with this white identity, largely for the sake of naturalization. Mexicans then deployed racial scripts in relation to other racialized groups (i.e. Japanese-Americans, Chinese-Americans, Black) and realized that those scripts that had unfavorable consequences were due to the distance that the racialized groups had with being white.

With racialized tensions growing exponentially, anti-Indian and antiblack positionalities became evermore present as these tensions often turned violent and became embedded within national and political discourses (Blackwell, Lopez, & Urrieta, 2017). Particularly, how *indigenismo* as a state-sanctioned ideology often worked in tandem with *mestizaje,* as the Chicano movement "recycled Mexican state notions of

indigenismo through an Aztec-centric celebration of the Indigenous past of the nation" (p.131). Mestizaje can also transform into an essentialized hybridity that can mask exploitation and other forces that could lead to "reifying miscegenation and foregrounding 'consciousness', spirituality, and cultural representation as the necessary political acts granting legitimacy and emancipation" (Sánchez, p.356, 1997). Often locating indigeneity within the Indian past, instead of present, the task becomes more than just the acknowledgement of the Indigenous past and origins, but about "remembering and relearning how to honor them" (Rodriguez and Cuevas, p.232, 2017).

As mentioned previously, the sections presented are not to be seen mutually exclusive from each other, as the complicities of these sections weave, contradict, or align with one another. In this case, diaspora and *mestizaje* have a rather intricate referentiality amongst the broader imaginaries of diasporic subjects in relation to an ideologically constructed *mestizaje.* Whereas Rinderle (2005), Butler (2001), Hall (2014), and Safran (1991) in their work mention that hybridity and heterogeneity are part/and a goal of diasporic conditionalities, the critique of *mestizaje* places a particular contention to this notion. In other words, since *mestizaje* claims affinities towards the hybridization of blurred genealogies, diaspora studies may then not want necessarily for heterogeneity to be an actual goal of diasporic subjects when it is at the expense of black and Indigenous peoples. As *mestizaje* has been unsettled and (re)contextualized through a sociohistorically discursive shift, scholars such as Urrieta (2016), Grande (2000), Milian (2013), and Banks (2005) provide needed nuances to see where and how *mestizaje* may

be reified through diasporic paradigms. Which in turn, cater to a conversation that must be tended to in regards to settler colonialisms and comparative decolonialities.

SETTLER COLONIALISMS AND COMPARATIVE DECOLONIALITIES

"Colonization is as horrific as humanity gets: genocide, desecration, poxed-blankets, rape, humiliation" (Tuck and Ree, p.642, 2013). Many scholars have pointed to the centralization of (settler) colonialisms within their work, in order to make decoloniality a project that is not only necessary, but inevitable for the radical transformation of the subjugated peoples who are seen as subperson or othered (Tuck and Yang, 2012; Calderon, 2016; Urrieta, 2016; Smith, 2013; Wolfe, 2006). In so much that, settler-colonial projects are explicitly pertinent to chronicle as settler colonialisms rely on the nation-state to build empires (Wolfe, 2006) through dispossession of Indigenous peoples from their lands and cultures that ultimately require self-ascertained western/eurocentric knowledge systems and legal-political institutions to construct and maintain settler societies (Smith, 2013; Tuck and Yang, 2012). Smith (2013) contextualizes this nature of western pragmatism and research upon the Native and Indigenous peoples; specifically, how western knowledge constructionisms became settler colonial tools, such as the field of anthropology, to further displace and dispossess Indigenous peoples via European enlightenment (amongst other epistemic violences). As an empire and continual project, colonization is not simply content with its wrath of displacement, dispossession, and acculturation. Its "perverted logic" revisits the

oppressive pass with the sole purpose to “distort, disfigure, and destroy it” (Fanon, p.170, 1963).

Settler colonialism, then, is constituted as a particular colonialism that is inherently rooted in the possession, invasion, and conquering of Indigenous lands and resources, while also serving as a regime and organizing structure for the perpetual dehumanization and elimination of Native peoples (Urrieta, 2016; Smith, 2013; Wolfe, 2006). Tuck and Yang (2012) explain, "in order for the settlers to make a place their home, they must destroy and disappear the Indigenous peoples that live there. Indigenous peoples are those who have creation stories, not colonization stories, about how we/they came to be in a particular place - indeed how we/they came to be a place. Our/their relationships to land comprise our/their epistemologies, ontologies, and cosmologies" (pg.6). The colonial epoch was so manipulative that its domination came from attempting to convince the colonized that if the settler was to ever disappear and leave, that they would fall into barbarisms, primitivisms, and bestiality (Fanon, 1963). The reification of the racial state through settler colonial regimes and legacies is furthered unsettled and nuanced, when taking into account the contextualization of racial formations and binaries (A. Smith, 2012). As Brayboy (2005) mentions that Critical Race Theory (CRT) has paid little attention to the Native and Indigenous populations, specifically about colonialisms and sovereignty, racializations processes do not adequately capture the particular conversations between Native studies and critical race theorists. However, Eve Tuck (et. al, 2014) helps us understand the conversations that are to be had about sovereignty, racializations, and land, specifically deploying geotheorizing as a way to nuance the

colonial-settler paradigm within blackness and the ultimate goal of the settler state. In delineating these conventions, part of the settler state is to always have themselves as the primary agents, especially through an interest convergence in the name of progress and inclusion.

Interest convergence was conceptualized by Derrick Bell (1979) and can be explained as "the interests of blacks in achieving racial equality will be accommodated only when it converges with the interests of whites" (p.523). Basically, prompting that Whites usually voice the ways in which Black citizens should be entitled to constitutional protection against racialized violence, only if the ramifications do not alter the status and privileges accorded to whites. Bell (1979) decides to deploy the landmark case of Brown vs. Board of Education to exemplify how this interest convergence is an act of what I call a white soliloquy[6]. As he mentions, the value of education for black people and the uphill battle that accompanied this terrain was not a recently developed concept presented in 1954. What changed about this terrain was now there was some consideration of the decision's value to whites not necessarily based on the racial uplift and liberation of black people (and by process all racialized people). Specifically, how white policymakers saw an economic and political advance "at home and abroad that would follow abandonment of segregation" (p.524).

In this deployment, we see how white elite were deliberately constructing a transitional image of the US to present itself as a "home of democracy" while they

[6] the proclamation of a white Eurocentric society and its internalized whiteness that is often announced publicly and/or discreetly regardless of those (racialized peoples) that condemn it as violent.

continued their settler colonial enterprise of the Cold War with the Soviet Union to "win economic and political allies in Africa" (Gillborn, p.479, 2013) while strategically neglecting the rudimental foundations of why racialized violence exists in the first place. Though Bell's (1979) piece has received influential traction in many different disciplines, one being education, interest divergence has not garnered the same ubiquitous acknowledgement but is very much pertinent to this conversation. Lani Guinier (2004), clearly influenced by the work of Derrick Bell, takes on the mirror of the interest convergence dilemma towards one of divergence. Stating that the status quo (white, wealthy and the elite) has historically manipulated the construction of race to hierarchically order towards their own social, economic, and political benefits.

These racialized hierarchies, rationalized by white supremacy and reinforced through racism, normalize the unequal distribution of resources and (re)inscribe the relationships of power that are perpetuated through this system. What ultimately ends up happening, as Guinier (2004) argues, interest divergence is catalyzed by economic downturn, and "white elites will perceive an even greater need to placate poor whites by demonstrating the continued benefits of their whiteness" (Gillborn, p.480, 2013). However, Andrea Smith (2012) reminds us that without the settler colonialism conditionality upon the narratives of racializations, one cannot fathom other forms of governance that are not founded within the racial state. Such that Native peoples "liminality as both racial and legal/political groups individuals" (Brayboy, p.425, 2005) are reoriented and expanded upon in relation to the racial state. This necessitates an understanding that white supremacy, that works in tandem with colonialism, is

operational through a multi-prism logic, that calls for far more elaborate conventions of genocide, orientalism, and capitalism. Where eventually education and schools as colonialist institutions serve the interests of colonizers, Euro-whites, and Mestizos, and Ladinos in power, throughout America (Urrieta, 2017).

More explicit to education, we can see this inquiry as invasion built rather seamlessly into normalized operations such as coding, which often is stated as pseudo-quantitative inquiry (St. Pierre and Jackson, 2014), that is disguised as objective science that eventually expands the settler colonial knowledge production (Tuck and Yang, 2014). As Ta-Nehisi Coates (2015) powerfully demonstrates:

> "If the streets shackled my right leg, the schools shackled my left. Fail to comprehend the streets and give up your body now. But fail to comprehend the schools and you give up your body later... But the laws of the schools were aimed at something distant and vague... the World had no time for the childhoods of black girls and boys" (Coates, p.25, 2015)

Baldwin (2000) explicates these settler conditionalities in his talk to teachers speech in 1963. Stating that, education must be an avenue that allows people to investigate, inquire, and question what society is and has to offer. That "the paradox of education is precisely this – that as one begins to become conscious one begins to examine the society in which he is being educated" (p. 124-125). He emphasizes that black people have had a historically corrupted version of education, not only omitting

history and realities which is a project of the settler colonial nation (Fanon, 1963; Tuck and Yang, 2014; A. Smith 2012), but in the same process, (re)inscribing an inferiority by cutting the intellectual curiosity of black (and other disenfranchised) peoples and "[running] the risk of becoming schizophrenic" (p.124).

Through these colonial endeavors, education often (re)inscribes these settler notions usually masked in epistemic projects such as social justice, multiculturalism, and research. For example, Tuck (2009) elucidates the ways in which damage-centered research exploits many Indigenous, Native, marginalized and disenfranchised communities. Tuck believes that damage-centered research, or research that primarily focuses on the "damaged" or "broken" aspects of certain communities, takes precedence when talking about the most vulnerable peoples. Research that is centered in this way neglects the resilience and the survival that many of these communities embody due to the sociopolitical climate that they are situated in. Or that Indigenous knowledges are not worth academia's time, as in Brayboys (2005) experience with being called a good storyteller and not a good theorist. Which his mother replied to with "Baby, doesn't she know that our stories are our theories?" (p.426). Which calls on the larger narrative of survivance, remembering, and resilience (Smith, 1999) and aims towards a desire-centered approach (Tuck, 2009); a framework that allows for the contradiction, complexity, and self-determination of those lived lives.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

THINKING WITH THEORY

As the project developed, the methodological and theoretical delineations are more closely aligned with what some scholars would say is a post-qualitative approach (St. Pierre, 2012), maybe a postmodernist convention (MacLure, 2006) or a post-approach to the way I hope to engage with theory and data (Jackson and Mazzei, 2012). In that, this type of qualitative inquiry attempts to rupture, disorientate, and pry open the way that traditional qualitative inquiry has been subsumed into a quasi-quantitative orientation; especially in regards to coding, data, and analysis (St. Pierre & Pillow, 2002; Koro-Ljungberg, MacLure, and Ulmer, 2018; Tuck and Yang, 2014). As these scholars mention, static qualitative research is often operationalized through multiple types of quantitative, humanistic, and positivist endeavors that reify binaries and unsettled power/knowledge dichotomies (Lather and St. Pierre, 2013). For example, coding as a methodological tool has been deployed across a multiplicity of qualitative research to circumvent themes for analysis. However, coding "in the guise of objective science, expands the project of settler colonial knowledge production - inquiry as invasion is built into normalized operations of the researcher" (Tuck and Yang, p.811, 2014). This routinstic tendency to over-code certain communities, especially Indigenous, ghettoized and orientalized communities, not only makes them invisibilized, but hyper visibilizes as well, that benefits the state, research, and police, at the expense of these communities' livelihoods (Tuck and Yang, 2014).

For these reasons, I will be orientating my method of inquiry, towards one with "thinking with theory" (Jackson and Mazzei, 2012). More specifically, as both Jackson and Mazzei (2012) describe it, thinking with theory is to think *with* data (or use data to think *with* theory) "in order to accomplish a reading of data that is both within and against interpretivism" (p. vii). By cutting into the center of data, not just visualizing and contextualizing it, we are forced to (re)imagine the complexities and particularities of the data we are working with (p.vii). These two authors pull heavily from the works of Deleuze and Guatarri, in particularly, this concept of "plugging in" which is more of a process than a concept, and by extension becomes a process of unmaking and making. This process would compromise (1) decentering concepts by disrupting the theory/practice binary via the way these concepts constitute each other (2) how certain analytical questions are reconfigured and made possible by certain theoretical concepts within the middle of plugging in (3) and working constantly with the same data for different knowledge productions (p.5). The analytical and theoretical practices that I am interested in actively engaging with are those of: *listening to images* (Campt, 2017), and the theoretical contributions of refusal, desire (Tuck and Yang, 2014; Simpson, 2016; McGranahan, 2016), and futurities (Tuck and Gaztambide-Fernndez, 2014; Campt, 2017).

However, I do not fully align with Jackson and Mazzei, in that these openings are new or we can see a "newness" incited by this cutting, but more so that we are (re)envisioning the imaginaries and our peripheries to see/feel/experience them. Additionally, many of the orientations that Jackson and Mazzei deploy in their book

come from poststructural, postmodern, posthuman, theorists such as Derrida, Foucault, Barad, and Butler, which are interesting because they are predominantly Euro-centric/western critiques on the Eurocentric/western modernist, positivist, and humanistic totalizing discourses (Lather, 1991). With this in mind, my goal is not to deny these seminal scholars and their research that have catered and disrupted boundaries within discourses on materialisms, precarities, and power/knowledge, but to recognize that these works hold certain epistemic and ontological prevalence, largely in part, because of their Eurocentric/western orientations.

An example of what I mean is when the disruption of totalizing discourses happens via the same Eurocentric/western theoretical conventions, which then comes at the expense of black, queer, and Indigenous peoples epistemic, ontological, and cosmological contributions (Todd, 2016; Jackson, 2015; Hunt, 2014). More specifically, take the "ontological turn" or the "posthuman or beyond the human" that are epistemically rooted matrices that decenter the human and give precedence and importance to materialities (Snaza et. al, 2014). Todd (2016) warns us that the ontological turn is just another version of colonialism that essentially co-opts Indigenous frameworks and epistemologies and regurgitates them into a "new" turn of methodological and theoretical inquiry. Or how the "beyond the human" does not critically incorporate racializations into their projects; but rather the posthumanist, object-oriented, and new materialist silence persists despite the "antiblackness into the nonhuman - as blackness conditions and constitutes the very nonhuman disruption and/or displacement [these scholars] invite" (Jackson, p,216, 2015). In attempting to not reify certain

colonial/imperial/totalizing practices, I tread water lightly with deploying "thinking with theory" as the method of inquiry and hope to not partake in what Tuck and Yang (2014) call inquiry as invasion. In tandem, with "thinking with theory" I will be deploying an autoethnographic venture, which includes "Listening to Images" (Campt, 2017), alongside/within the previously mentioned theoretical and analytical conventions, to create an assemblage of epistemic and theoretical envisages.

Refusal & Desire:

To refuse is not a simple task of saying no (McGranahan, 2016), but agentive and generative in its usage and a way that social science can learn from the experiences of the peoples who have been/are dispossessed (Tuck and Yang, 2014). "Refusal holds on to truth, structures this truth as a stance through time…" (Simpson, p.330, 2016) which operates as the revenge of consent, while also unfolding the desire and dissent that are present in such an act (Tuck and Yang, 2014). Those stories that are of pain and humiliation are the ones that academia wants, a violence enacted on the subaltern who only get asked to speak when the intention is to commodify their pain (hooks, 1990; Tuck and Yang, 2014). There are the parts of knowledges and stories that academia does not deserve (Tuck and Yang, 2014), and I will still tell you a story, but you may be reading something else (Tuck and Ree, 2013), and I will consent with telling the story of that constraint (Simpson, 2016). Instead of asking to talk about pain, about how much I have suffered, and by extension, how my community feels that pain, I will ask myself about

desire, the antidote for damage narratives (Tuck and Ree, 2013). By deploying this theoretical and analytical tool, I will construct an assemblage of vignettes of how my life, in relation to materialities, precarities, and others, caters to the overall project of an autoethnography. More specifically, through stories, metaphors, memories, journaling, dreams, and poetry, I hope to see how my diasporic migrations and journeys can be (re)imagined, and how these ways of contextualizing data can be eventually implemented within school curricula and pedagogies.

Futurities:

The works of Eve Tuck and Ruben Gaztambide-Fernandez (2013) and Tina Campt (2017) will be deployed. Even though Campt (2017) describes her work in relation to the black feminist futurities, the utility of her philosophical and theoretical conventions will push the boundary of this project. Specifically, in the way that she conceptualizes futurities as "the tense of possibility that grammarians refer to as the future real conditional or *that which will have* ***had to*** *happen."* (p.17). In other words, the performance of the future that has not yet happened, and to imagine beyond this current fact towards one of envisioning that which is not, but must be; to live the future that you want to see, right now, in the present. However, as Tuck and Gaztambide-Fernandez (2013) caution us, we must move carefully to not replace the ultimate goal of futurity, with one that reifies a settler colonial imagined future. Specifically, futurity refers to the ways in which, "the future is rendered knowable through specific practices (i.e.

calculation, imagination, and performance) and, in turn, intervenes upon the present through three anticipatory logics (i.e. pre-caution, pre-emption and preparedness)" (Andrew Baldwin, p. 173, 2012; Tuck and Gaztambide-Fernandez, p. 80, 2013). To what Tuck and Gaztambide-Fernandez (2013) position as Indigenous futurity, which does not foreclose the inhabitation by non-Indigenous peoples on the land of the Indigenous, but does disrupt, destroy, and foreclose the possibility of settler colonial futurity, and by extension, settler colonialisms and epistemologies. By implementing this theoretical and conceptual tool of futurity, I will be able to further push the boundaries by not only seeing and living the future, but how it is also done through refusal - consent's revenge (Simpson, 2016).

By being particular with the data I deploy, refusal of that which I do not wish to share, with a futurity that (re)imagines my subjectivities through one of desire for a better world for those next generations, I hope "thinking with theory" aids in the assemblage of these envisionings. As mentioned earlier, autoethnography is the main methodological venture I will take, while also incorporating the method of "listening to images" (Campt, 2017), to capture the intricacies of a journey that I made/will make/have been making/that may happen in relation to all that there is. Why this is so crucial for education, specifically curriculum and instruction, is because it provides an avenue towards the ultimate project that Tuck and Yang (2012) call decolonial projects within education. How amazing would it be to see students take an autoethnographic journey sometime throughout their school career instead of sitting for hours being plagued by

standardization? There is nothing standard about our existence. Instead of seeing them truant for not going to class, why not ask them to map out their contextualization of their absence through an autoethnographic venture. One concrete example I can see is how absenteeism places blame on truancy for students going to Mexico for an extended amount of time during the holidays (Urrieta and Martinez, 2011). Identifying key moments like the one mentioned can be times where we introduce these critical curricular projects that validates the students acts of migration, home(coming), and diasporic relationalities in schools.

So, in an attempt to move past the post positivism within qualitative data, the liminalities, precarities, and subtleties of my life are through, with, around, in between, in the peripheral, and throughout this whole thesis. Often times you will question why I placed them in the order that I did; does it flow? Or ask why my voice comes off the way it does; is it bothersome? Or even why this work will ultimately not be generalizable; this is not for you? By deploying this type of methodology, while also incorporating these non-traditional ways to work with data, I prie open, cut through/to the center, unfold, unmake, assemble, destroy, mitigate, make unclear, keep to myself, and decide to share parts of my becomings, so we may be able to manifest those futurities that take the liminalities of ourselves seriously. Schools and education are a key place to continue on with this type of work.

AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

Espejo de obsidiana

Your cloudy surface is so clear

It whispers

You are your ancestor(s prayer)

I will start by sharing a story. Me and my mom were sitting in the living room one day, watching Laura (que pase el desgraciado!) while eating our cafecito con pan. I can't remember exactly what episode this was, but it sparked an interest in my mom. A story that my mom was eager to share. She started talking about herself when she was a little kid, how she never misbehaved, and the life she lived in that beautiful house that belonged to my grandma in La Estancia, Guanajuato. Mi ma then started talking about how she used to till the lands with my grandpa because, as he said, el sol no espera a los huevones (the sun doesn't wait for those who are lazy). It's true – it really doesn't. One day while tilling that land that they loved so much, she looked up to the sky and saw a plane flying above her. She takes a quick pause in her storytelling; as if she was reliving that exact moment, her memories for a second became her present. She tells me, "Sabes que queria cuando yo era una chiquilla, hijo? En ese momento, me prometi que si la vida me daba estas tres cosas - solo tres - nunca pediria por mas. La primera cosa era una television para ver mis novelas cuando yo quisiera. La segunda era suficiente comida para que mi pancita se llenara bien. Y la ultima cosa, era subirme en uno de esos aviones.

Y que crees hijo? La vida me dio eso y tanto mas. Nunca pedire por mas, por que veo a mis hijos, y esas tres cosas que ya se realizaron, y me pregunto, que mas quiero? Ya lo tengo todo" (Do you know what I wanted when I was a little girl, son? In that moment, I promised myself that if life gave me three things, only three, I would never ask for more. The first was a television so I could watch my novelas whenever I wanted. The second, was to have enough food so my little belly would be full. The last thing was to get on one of those planes. And guess what, son? Life has given me all that and so much more. I will never ask for more because I see my children, and those three things that were realized, and I ask myself, what more do I want? I have it all).

I start with a story because stories are at the center of autoethnographies – a research methodology that often times goes unnoticed and undervalued. Stories transcend this notion that they are a rudimental aspect of life and a way to entertain rather than inform, but rather "[stories] hold a greater purpose of teaching, learning, and, at times, creating new knowledge" (McIvor, p.140, 2010). Take for example, Miguel and Francisco Guajardo (2016) and the way in which they deployed this construct of a story to delineate a pedagogical approach by their father; a part that was both radically an epistemic and ontological life-conceptualization as much as it was a long withstanding pedagogical venture. From this affinity to understand stories as a legitimate theoretically contribution, I believe that autoethnography best caters to further nuancing this crystallized fluidity that is the interrelation between research, praxis, and life.

The field of qualitative education research (amongst others) still is very much tainted with westernized and anglo/euro-centric discourses that reify colonial power

relations by delegitimizing methodologies and practices that drift "too" far from the stagnant pool of already established traditional research formations. Minerva S. Sanchez (2012) adamantly addresses that academic writing often creates an "academic distance" between personal experiences and the final scholarly piece of work. To her, "distance… is meant to convey the deeply theoretical and intensely abstract papers that are characteristically valued in higher education in their objectivity and their distance from educational practices" (p.334). What often is missing from these distancing pieces is that "there is great knowledge and power right where we are from and in our daily lives" (Lipe and Lipe 2017). In this sense, autoethnographies are vital to my work as I am attempting to disentangle an (un)diasporic self in relation to (re)migration, home/coming, and indigenous centered reclamations of knowing and being.

Throughout the literature, the construct of autoethnography varied from study to study depending on the goals and context in which the scholars were situated. Critical self-reflexivity proved to be a major tenant when employing this method (Lipe & Lipe, 2017; Guajardo & Guajardo, 2017; Stewart, 2017; King, 2015; Sykes, 2014; Woods, 2011). Specifically, how autoethnographies entail this type of critical reflexivity to examine transformative experiences (Skyes, 2014) and to co-construct and story tell (Woods, 2011) in which it becomes both a product and a process by making "connections between personal narratives and culture using various sources as data, including dialog, emotion and self-consciousness" (Stewart, p.292, 2017 cited from Jones et al., 2014) through a cultural analysis. By locating autoethnography through a mechanism such as storytelling followed by this epistemic construct of critical self-reflection, allows for

those who "might live on the margins to find themselves within these spaces of resistance, resilience, and struggle as we collectively develop a pedagogy and epistemology of the self within our ecology" (Guajardo and Guajardo, p.7, 2017). Allowing such formulations to develop through an autoethnographic approach, academics such as Minerva Chavez (2012) find this method imperative in order to recreate the instances, within the backdrop of critical self-reflexivity, where collisions between hegemonic ideological constructs and the self are unpacked and reconfigured.

Autoethnography, therefore is a tactic that intricately, and purposefully, diverges from traditional academic research methodology to transverse into a microcosm of ontological (re)centering. In the same instance, autoethnography allows for this rather unconventional liminal space that, although might seem self-centric, constitutes a power linkage and elicits "separate individuals into a shared consciousness" (Gonzales, p.41, 2015 cited from Richardson, 1997). This shared consciousness allows one to discern the un-centrality of this method, as one does not do anything alone but rather, we "seek to present our understandings as derived from our relationships with all that has come before us and all that will come after us" (Francis and Munson, p.49, 2017). In this respect, autoethnography also comes with a responsibility of this acknowledgement as we as people are the relatives on this earth that have been here the shortest amount of time. Meaning, that we as humans are the youngest relative, and by reason, we are also the ones who require the most growth but also the ones who must tend to those who have come before us (Lipe & Lipe, 2017).

Through these theoretical and epistemic conceptualizations is a general understanding of what an autoethnography can potentially embody. Additionally, within the literature that was read on autoethnographies, there were three themes that emerged throughout the work that helped ground the directionality of my research as well as the inquiry and questions that were not fully addressed. The three themes are as follows: Indigenous Centric, Healing/Medicine, Reciprocity. These are prominent themes, however they do not, and cannot, exist mutually exclusive from each other. Much like a story, they must be read within an integrated and interweaving narrative and context as being stand-alone themes would not be conducive to a holistic understanding. By formulating these themes, I hope to configure a stronger sense of the onto/epistemic space I embody within my work, and the way that it may help nuance this (un)diasporic subjectivity that lingers within a space of liminality upon my (re)migration.

Indigenous-Centric:

The first theme that will be addressed is the idea that autoethnographies are centered within Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and understanding. As new waves of Indigenous centered research and methodologies emerge, according to McIvor (2010) she mentions that there is an underlying foundation in which many of these approaches and work have – self-determination and a commitment to a decolonial process and movement. More specifically, there are distinct synergies between the way in which Indigenous research paradigms and autoethnographic ventures are conceptualized. One, being the centrality of "self" within the work "without a sharp separation between the

researcher and the subject" (p.141). Second, is the idea of "shared modality and intentional use of storytelling as method" (p.141). In that, autoethnography and its multiplicity of components such as critical self-reflexivity, co-constructing and storytelling, is closely in sync with Indigenous learning practices (Woods, 2011). These practices are then viewed within Indigenous frameworks and paradigms where the relationship between story and knowing as well as the interrelationship between narrative and research are inseparable (Francis & Munson, 2017).

An additional component of this Indigenous-centric theme was the intentional framing of intergenerational linkages and connectedness. More specifically many of the literature looks at the way in which elders, little ones, our older relatives (plants, the elements, other animals) have an undeniable symbiosis with each other. For example, grandmothers or abuelitas are known to embody ancestral knowledge. They adamantly engage in these dynamic exchanges of knowledge upon realizing their contextual histories and cultural and linguistic maintenance and survival (Gonzales, 2015). Or the way in which Lipe & Lipe (2017) allowed their children to participate in their Native Hawaiian Language Classes, which were mostly filled with Hawaiian elders who were eager to participate in language revitalization and saw this opportunity to bridge the intergenerational dissonance that is sometimes fissured into research, praxis, and life. The way that many scholars acknowledge the theoretical and conceptual contributions of their children, parents, grandparents, and/or ancestors, demonstrates how intergenerational connectedness is an imperative antecedent to the scholars' ways of knowing and being (Chavez, 2015; Lipe & Lipe, 2017; Guajardo & Guajardo, 2017; Francis & Munson,

2017; McIvor, 2010). Even though some of these scholars are not explicitly stating that these practices are Indigenous-centric, upon reading the similarities across the literature from Native and Indigenous scholars, one can begin to trace the commonalities within the research praxis and epistemologies of work that is not exactly Indigenous-centric.

Healing and Medicine:

The second theme that was noticed, is this idea of healing and medicine. Let me elaborate on these concepts as they might diverge from traditional constructs. I mean healing as this spiritual and ontological understanding that traverses through a static physiological deployment, but triangulates, and therefore complicates, with our spiritual, psychological, emotional, and reflexive self. With this, we can further nuance how healing can (re)configure what it is that is healing or must be healed. Medicine follows closely with this line of thinking, as medicine is not simply something that you take that makes you feel better. More specifically, within the ways that I have been so privileged and humbled to come to get to know as well as the research that also supports this, medicine is also this (meta)physical construct that transcends to a macrocosm of what heals us as persons, and what we have that heals others. Our laughter is medicine. The water we drink is medicine. The shade that trees provide is medicine. Our curiosity is medicine. Our pet's love for us is medicine. By (re)imagining our/others' medicine, we circumvent general notions that pharmaceuticals are the only medicinal apparatus, towards one of Indigenous-centric philosophizing; in that, mother earth has provided all

the medicines here on this planet for us, we just forgot what purposes they had served in our past.

"My medicine comes from the stories I was taught as a boy" from "[Lee:] my father, grandmother, and great-grandmother; my lineage to the pueblo of Laguna" (Francis & Munson, p.55, 2017). Even if medicine is not the term that scholars use, scholars like Sykes (2014) who are engaging in language and cultural revitalization is their own form of medicine; the desire and necessity, to reconnect, relearn, and rebecome. As we are all recovering from this intergenerational trauma, Lipe & Lipe (2017) remind us that we are all healing and as a way communally and personally heal, we must be open to vulnerability and "be willing to expose ourselves" (McIvor, p,142, 2010). As this nudity and vulnerability "also opens possibilities for compassion, kindness, and greater levels of understanding" (p.142). In this sense, by further demanding our reflexive selves to become a theoretical and conceptual selves (more so within westernized pragmatism), methods such as stories will reveal how "[they] can heal the ruptures created by conquest" (Gonzalez, p.42, 2015). Too often this type of western pragmatism constricts itself for this constant affinity towards objectivity, but healing and medicine are not objective constructs. In a similar breath as Stewart (2017) and zir's research on masculine of centre non-binary/genderqueer trans* (MoC-NG/GQT*) identity, research "must seek not to arrive at some form of representational logic that is fixed and universal" (p.300). By diverging from this objectivity, we can fully capture the essence of healing and medicine in relation to research and academia.

Reciprocity:

The last theme that emerged was this idea of reciprocity, that we do and must do, not for ourselves, but for others; and doing so, others will too, as this is the cyclical nature of life. Robin Kimmerer, a Potawatomi botanist, beautiful describes this ancestral law of life "Know the ways of the ones who take care of you, so that you may take care of them. Introduce yourself. Be accountable as the one who comes asking for life. Ask permission before taking. Never take the last. Take only what you need. Take only that which is given. Never take more than half. Leave some for others. Harvest in a way that minimizes harm. Use it respectfully. Never waste what you have taken. Share. Give thanks for what you have been given. Give a gift, in reciprocity for what you have taken. Sustain the ones who sustain you and the earth will last forever" (Kimmerer, p.183, 2013). This task of reciprocity becomes imperative to autoethnographic work, as we see in what ways is the work that we do not only *not* necessarily about us, but in relation to giving back to those who we wish this research will reach.

Reciprocity, then, is not just a question of what does the earth offer me, but what do I offer to the earth? This disrupts this elitist complex that is the "production of research" by understanding that producing is not necessarily reciprocal, that we must listen and be listened to, to truly adhere to this ancestral law of giving and receiving. That is why community work becomes a central tenet of reciprocity, because it "strengthens our spirit, informs our research, and guides our teaching" (Guajardo & Guajardo, p.20, 2017). To these scholars, this axiom of reciprocity was given to them by their abuelita by stating that "ayer fui yo, hoy son mis vecinos, y mañana son mis hijos (yesterday it was

me, today it is our neighbors, and tomorrow it will be my children)" (p.20). Generations of ancestral knowledge have unfolded upon realizing this act, and the interdependent and reciprocal nature between the relationship of elder siblings to younger siblings (re)emerges (Lipe & Lipe, 2017). To others who have diverted from this path, the medicinal and axiological understanding of reciprocity becomes a nuisance under the backdrop of a consumption-driven economy. What good does giving do, if we have been taught to keep taking? By deconstructing this neoliberal conditionality that is perpetual taking, to this reconfiguring of constant reciprocity, research becomes a different task. In which we are bound to the community and with the community, instead of an individual researcher that makes meaning on behalf of the research(ed) (Francis & Munson, 2017).

I look back and see what my mom was telling me. The way that she loved to till the land regardless of the gift of sweat and tears she would give to it. She knew that one day life would give her something back, even though that gift was never mentioned. My mom still tends to the earth in the way that she was taught. I have never seen someone with such a miraculous gift, of love and reciprocity, towards life, the earth, and her children. She now tends to her own garden, tilling away, remembering, giving, and making sure that she listens so that she can be listened to. The neighbor tells her that everything she touches just grows. This is true. Just this weekend she reminded me of this beautiful concept of reciprocity, an idea that is as much gift as it is lesson. As she tended to her tomatoes in Mexico last year, she noticed one had fallen off and was rotting away. Instead of throwing it in the trash, she gave it back to ground near our house. Weeks later she noticed that it had started growing in between the cracks of the cement. She gave it

water, and hoped it would be kind enough to give her some tomatoes down the line. By remembering these Indigenous ways of knowing and being, of healing and medicine, and about reciprocity we start to understand the story about my mom differently. Not as a story to tell, but as coded lessons, guidance, laws of life, and humble beginnings. By acknowledging that she has it all, those words ripple throughout my life. I have everything, because I was gifted everything. The process is me healing to understand this lesson and give back. A lesson that I must embark within an autoethnographic approach, to understand what it means to be (un)diasporic subject. Who I am, in relation to who I want to be, or maybe to whom I was meant to be. And knowing that this rather seemingly individual journey is never for me, but for those who are yet to come.

CHAPTER IV

An E(X)/Tension with Ourselves

When I came to Austin, TX this was my first reaction "WOW, there are so many brown and black people here. Look at all that melanin!". Little did I realize that this was the whitest city in Texas. Back at UW-Madison the total population for "hispanic" is barely 5%[7]. UT-Austin has a "hispanic" population of about 20%[8]. You can probably imagine why I reacted the way I did. But I despise that word. "Hispanic". And I am uncomfortable with Latina/o. I see the contentions of Xicanisma. Was not born in Mexico, so Mexican becomes confusing. Mexican-American is hilariously ironic… so no. Within the past few years these terms have undergone a new wave of unsettlement. For this reason, I have been fascinated by the formulations of this deployment of the "x" in Spanish lexicon (i.e. Latina/o towards Latinx). In a way, replacing traditionally static gendered traditions of the Spanish language, into a sociolinguistic rupture. Maybe these ventures will provide guidance for me, disrupt my own peripheries. I would like to trace some of these conversations here. As I deploy the "x" in my own writing, it would prove useful to understand some of the complexities surrounding such an endeavor.

With the increasing popularity of digital communication, information sharing, and social media usage (Duggan, M. et al. 2015), we cannot deny its impact on certain

[7] https://registrar.wisc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/36/2017/10/report-enrollment-2017fall.pdf

[8] https://www.utexas.edu/about/facts-and-figures).

sociocultural, geopolitical, and ethnohistorical constructions. Particularly, Chicana/o[9] and Latina/o studies are no strangers to negotiations, transformations, and contested debates within their academic parameters. Since the historical inception of the Chicana/o movement back in the 1960s, there has been plentiful dialogue on certain conceptualizations, terminology, and identity formation politics (Castillo 1994). Scholars often cite new directions for this discipline because of certain critical consciousness that arises from constructs such as activism, education, epistemologies, and self-identification (Castillo, 1994; Sánchez, 1997; Bernal, 2002; Berta-Ávila, 2003; Revilla, 2004; Vera, 2005). These scholars, among many others, attempt to craft a far more critical and nuanced perspective on subjectivities by incorporating multiple disciplines and methodologies. The last decade has brought forth a spectrum of new conceptualizations, constructions, and discursive shifts to critically analyze. The scope of this chapter will centralize on one of these shifting discourses; the deployment of the "x" in certain lexicons and positionalities within Chicana/o and Latina/o studies.

There has been an abundance of different deployments of the "x", each with certain conceptual connotations and ascriptions, that have manifested in the last two decades (Castillo, 1994; Rodriguez, 1996; Maiz, 1996; Berta-Ávila, 2003; Revilla, 2004; Rios, 2009; Milian 2013). Some examples include, but are not limited to, *Xicana, Xiacanisma, Chicanx, Latinx, and Muxer.* Each of these terms have a unique sociohistorical and geopolitical context that should be taken into account. Although there

[9] "Chicana/o and Latino/a" is used as a temporary term before going forth into the discussion of the discursive and linguistically shifts in the terminology and the overarching discipline.

are commonalities amongst these terms in the deployment of the "x", their specific placements are unique making it imperative to delineate the discursive shift(s) in linguistic (re)appropriation and identity formation. These conceptualizations range from the "x" having an Indigenous (broadly defined) ascription (Castillo, 1994; Maiz, 1996; Rodriguez, 1996; Berta-Ávila, 2003) to challenging the gendered binarism that is evident in the conventional terms Latina/o and Latin@ (Aviña, 2016; Cisneros, 2016; Josh Logue Op-Ed "Latina/o/x", 2015). This specific lexicon has emerged rapidly in the last two-three years within a multiplicity of platforms (academic journals, social media, etc.) especially due to the contributions of scholars, activists, students, and organizations.

As a cultural and communicative production, language is neither merely a combination of letters to make words and meaning nor a set of linguistic principles that remain unchanged. Rather, language as a fluctuating entity, which happens often in colloquial and slang terminology, is a phenomenon that does not happen exclusively from ethnic and social identity formation (Galindo 1995). Since Spanish relies on gendering words and syntax, according to users and supporters of the "x", this overtly erases and silences transgender, gender non-conforming, gender fluid, androgynist, two or multi-spirit, and agender bodies (amongst other gender identities and expressions) (Río & Aja, 2015). Through social media and other convenient modes of communication, this phenomenon has catapulted to the forefront of academic, social, and political discourses. However, not much investigation has been conducted on how the letter "x" manifested into the way it is now being deployed.

The scope of this chapter will incorporate sources from multiple disciplines ranging from sociology, education, Chicana/o and Latina/o studies, and gender and women's studies in order to explore the research, or lack thereof, surrounding this movement. To elaborate on this phenomenon, the analytical tool that will be utilized is social activism[10] (Halow 2014) with particular attention to queer Xicana[11] feminism and digital communication. Luis Urrieta also provides an important dimension in this discussion with his work on identity production and construction through figured worlds. Stating that many "Chicana/o activists" are in a constant political orientation and a "commitment to unlearn white supremacy" (Urrieta, p.118, 2007). Disassembling white supremacist notions and processes of colonialism are imperative in the manifestation of a socially active ideology. Much of the literature that addresses the emphasis on the "x", places particular opposition to traditional hegemonic constrictions of language domination, neoliberal and colonial legacies, and state-perpetuated racialized subjectivities (Maiz 1996; Rodriguez 1996; Revilla 2004; Moraga 2011). Even though these systemic forces fabricate lived realities, there is an active movement to dismantle these oppressive devices. The current contextual deployment of the "x" is now

[10] Broadly defined, and heterogeneous in fruition, social activism relates to the practices of individuals challenging the status quo in order to bring about social, political, and or economic change. This definition is cited from Summer Halow's (2014) article on Digital Communication and Immigrant Activism whom they cite from the introduction of Bart Cammaerts' (2007) book "Reclaiming the media: communication rights and democratic media roles". This definition is not meant to be definitive in nature, given multiple criticisms, but a basic foundation that will be elaborated on.

[11] I deploy "Xicana" and not "Xicanx" or "Chicanx" because of past terminology. Since the scope of this bibliographic essay is not to necessarily bring forth a new area of study, I will utilize the available terms in *relation* to the latter.

progressing towards gender-sexual inclusive rhetoric while simultaneously challenging gender binarism[12].

Throughout this chapter, I will present supporting evidence for a conversation that the "x" still challenges institutionalized forces with a far more concentrated focus on sexuality and gender ascription and performativity. However, its usage is in no way a means to an end, but rather a crucial component in the progression of a continuous fight for liberation. Social activism in conjunction with certain theoretical, ideological, and counterhegemonic characteristics allows for a more nuanced understanding. The following sections of the chapter will go in further detail: *History and First Appearances, Negotiated States of Becoming, Latinx & Chicanx, and Limitations, Critiques, and Future Directions*.

Through these four sections, I address some of the important themes that came into light as I did my preliminary investigation. It should be noted that there was no exact academic and scholarly article that explicitly addressed the usage of the "x". Much of the research regarded the substitution of the "ch" for the favorable "x" and not of the "@" or the "a/o" that is now present in current context. However limited, the research is plentiful to generate an analytical response on the evolution of this concept and the potential reasons why it has become such a popular movement in little more than two years. The following section will bring in some much needed historical and sociolinguistic context.

[12] Not all terms using the "x" can be said to be moving towards this deconstruction of gender bianrism. Further sections will provide additional clarification.

HISTORY AND FIRST APPEARANCES

Google Search Trends

Before going into a textual analysis of the literature, Google provides an interesting perspective on the emergence of certain terminology. Specifically, Google began tracking search trends at the beginning of 2004. Although this does not give a holistic representation of trends, especially those outside of digital communication, Google does provide an avenue in which to see the materialization of relatively new terms. Three terms were selected because of their technical deviation away from traditional gendered Spanish. Below are graphs generated by Google and the frequency in which the terms appear post-2004[13].

Figure 1: *Google search trend of "Xicanx.*

[13] These graphs are directly generated from Google and have no explicit methodological overview of the instruments, variables, and analytical interpretation deployed. The one aspect that is detailed is the *Interest over time* which describes the popularity of the term. Google states "Numbers [on the y axis] represent search interest relative to the highest point on the chart for the given region and time. A value of 100 is the peak popularity for the term. A value of 50 means that the term is half as popular. Likewise, a score of 0 means the term was less than 1% as popular as the peak."

As noted in Figure 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3, all three terms have experienced a generally higher popularity within the last two or three years. However, what is most surprising when looking at these terms individually, is that Xicanx spiked in June 2011 but virtually died off for the next two-three years. Since there is no literature of this specific sociohistorical instant, and given the fact that google search trends are potentially biased sources, this information should be treated lightly. Nonetheless, this information still provides an interesting detail in the evolution of certain terminology. Focusing on the remaining terms, Chicanx has a relatively linear progression in popularity while Latinx catapults in searches in the last couple years with Latinx actually being searched a fair amount of times back in April 2004. Although Latinx searchers in April 2004 were low in popularity, it is interesting enough to bring into question how frequently these terms may have emerged in different geopolitical contexts prior to 2004. Part of this feature on Google also allows you to search trends through geographical localities to further demonstrate possible inceptions. However, this will not be addressed in the context of this paper but may be a worthwhile venture in future discourse.

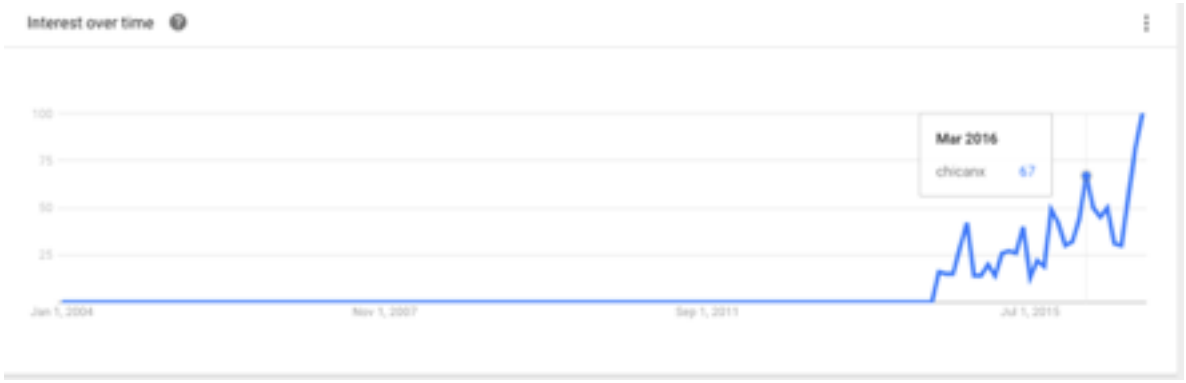

Figure 2: *Google Search Trend of "Chicanx".*

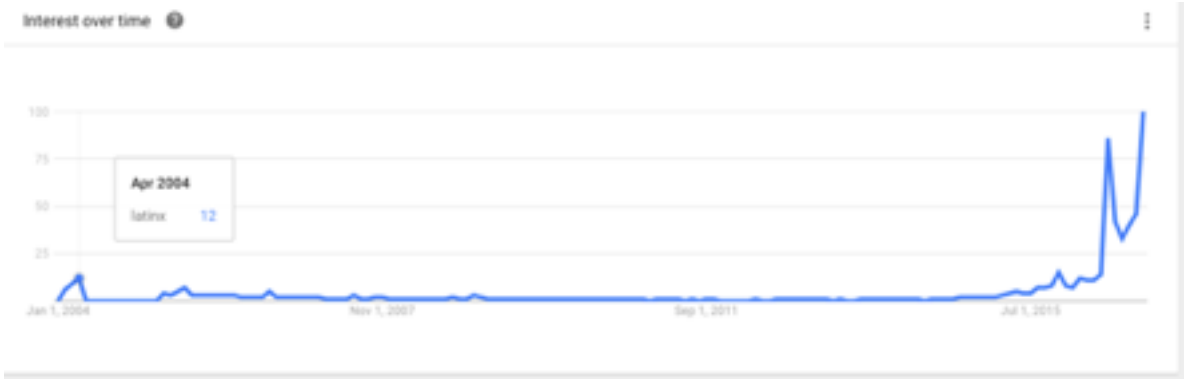

Figure 3: *Google Search Trend of "Latinx"*[14]

First intentions of the "X"

Certain literature that explicitly documented how and when the "X" was deployed, was almost nonexistent. Key search terms included Chicanx, Xicana, Xicanisma, Latinx, and Xicanx. Although there is plentiful operationalization of these terms, not much further investigation has been reported on the way these terms have manifested nor embodied by certain subjectivities. There were many articles that referenced their decision on a certain term like Latinx or Xicano, however, they would reference the current state of the terminology and not so much the development of how the term came into fruition. Nevertheless, the "X" has been around for more than two decades citing some of the earliest texts such as Ana Castillo's essay collection on Xicanisma in *Massacre of the Dreamers (1994)*.

[14] These trends were searched on November 20, 2016. Since trends are updated daily, graphs may be slightly altered when looked at later dates. Consequently, these graphs may not prove useful if not taken into context of when they were searched.

Castillo introduces this concept of Xicanisma as a way to (re)claim an indigeneity that has been masked by colonial legacies and racialized subjectivities (1994). Specifically, Castillo purposely focuses on Chicana feminism to ground her own theoretical framework since the early feminist movement was historically white women prioritizing a unilateral agenda. For example, white women would highlight pertinent issues such as reproductive rights, sexual harassment, and equitable income but seldom conceptualized the triangulation of racialization and these issues with non-white women. Authors like Cherríe Moraga describe how they felt betrayed by not only the white feminist movement, but by their Raza, the Chicana/o movement who subverted women and femme voices by constructing this image that they were derailing the larger liberation of the Raza by demanding that gender be a centralized component (Moraga, 2011). The double-barreled betrayal led some Chicana writers to a state of critical consciousness that eventually manifested a multidimensional critique of these movements static foundations. Incorporating interconnected axes of power such as gender, sexuality, class, socioeconomic status, globalization, indigeneity, nationality, self-reflexivity, and religion they were able to foreground conversations neglected by broader movements (Rios, 2013). For Castillo, repositioning herself in an ethnographic-autobiographical mode, her critical self-reflexivity assumed this "critical and countercultural perspective" that paved way towards "uncovering the constructed nature of identity and contesting dominant cultures and identities on the basis of particular difference" (Sánchez, p.350, 1997). Thus, it gave rise to this self-embodied and self-reflected term: Xicanisma. As a retaliation against acculturalist approaches to postcolonial feminisms, Xicanisma defies notions of

ascribed racialization and theoretical abstractions to bring front and center the ultimate goal of finding balance, beginning with oneself (Castillo, 1994).

As the "x" began to gain traction in literature, many authors began to conceptualize this movement and the reasons for its deployment. Apaxu Maiz (1996) in his book *Xicano: An Autobiography* gives a sociolinguistic chronology of how the "x" came into fruition. Maiz takes the reader through a geohistorical and sociopolitical journey of the southwest U.S. and Mexico conquest. He critically reflects on Indigenous erasure through colonial legacies, and by deploying sociolinguistics, he provides one context in understanding, first, why the erasure of the "x" happened. In other words, he traces the evolution of the word Chicano through the unnoticed acculturation of the sound value that "x" had in earlier Nahuatl[15] vernacular. Again, this one account is of Mexican origin and may not take into account the intricacies of certain geographies, ethnoscapes, and diasporic modalities. The imperative work of Gloria Anzaldúa's (1987) *Borderlands/ La Frontera: The New Mestiza* also contributes to this processes of "Language terrorism", as she mentions in her section "How to tame a wild tongue". Anzaldúa, vividly describes the constant liminal stage of being. How her borderlands are always in negotiation, construction, and conflict. Her linguistic identity becomes "twin" to her ethnic identity, and a true, complete self cannot be accomplished until "[she] can take

[15] Nahuatl is tied intimately with Maiz's sociolinguistic argument. However, there are up to 68 recognized indigenous languages in Mexico according to the Instituto Nacional de Lenguas Indígenas (http://www.inali.gob.mx/). His analysis prioritizes Nahuatl since he portrays in his work that the Spanish were forced to learn this language in order to communicate with the indigenous people (other languages included Mixtec, Zapotec, and Tarascan). Additionally, Maiz then emphasizes how Nahuatl was enforced in communication which lead to acculturation of other languages and then Nahuatl itself became a victim of language hegemony.

pride in [her] language" (Anzaldúa, p.81,1987). Although theoretically different, both Maiz and Anzaldúa were positioning language as a construct that is not mutually exclusive from colonialism, globalization, and cultural and ethnic identity formations.

Through language domination and Spanish expansion, the "X" shifted its phonetics towards a more traditional Spanish vocal. Maiz (1996) argues that this linguistic tyranny is often left unnoticed, but does indeed have a macrostructural influence on Indigenous erasure. As Roberto Rodriguez (1996) mentions in his book *The X en la Raza, "*Genocide is not only the systematic physical extermination of a people -- it also occurs psychologically" (p.7). Much to the same extent as Maiz, Rodriguez traces more specifically the word Chicano as a counternarrative for the pan-ethnic Hispanic label that is forced upon those who speak Spanish. More broadly, he describes that hispanization, in conjunction with the concept of mestizaje, to create what he terms a "de-indianized Hispanic" (p.50). Elaborating that mestizaje, in its current manifestation, was created by and for Eurocentric consciousness. In other words, mestizaje becomes an ill-conceived term that inherently neglects indigeneity by prioritizing Eurocentric ideals and values (Rodriguez, 1996). *Mestizaje* can also transform into an essentialized hybridity that can mask exploitation and other forces that could lead to "reifying miscegenation and foregrounding 'consciousness', spirituality, and cultural representation as the necessary political acts granting legitimacy and emancipation" (Sánchez, p.356, 1997). However, this does not necessarily mean that mestizaje is obsolete nor too ambiguous to provide contextual meaning. On the contrary, Anzaldúa (1987), Castillo (1994), Maiz (1995), and Rodriguez (1996), all wrestle with the complexity of such a unilaterally presented term

and the necessity to critically self-reflect with this construct. A wrestling that ultimately renders the construction of *mestizaje* into a new ideological terrain that must be furthered complicated within the discourse of detribalization, racializations, and settler colonialities.

The "x" was not simply a randomly selected letter which was later given context and legitimacy. As the works of these scholar's help illustrate, the "x" presented itself to the people as an avenue for social mobilization, radical self-reclamation, and communal preservation. Nonetheless, as much as Eurocentric legitimacies disregard Indigenous reclamation, there is a concerning tendency to also neglect the African diasporic conditions on mestizaje and/or ancestral genealogy of present day Mexico and the Southwest U.S (Rodriguez 1996). Although through passing, Roberto Rodriguez mentions that peoples from the Caribbean and other locales with strong African ancestral legacies and genealogies, "say that La Raza alludes to Indian or mestizo roots at the expense of African roots" (p27). This concept is imperative to understand the full scope of complexities with terms such as mestizaje that tend to silence different ancestral lineages. In the section, *Social Media's Catalyzing Dimensions*, Claudia Milian's work on Latining America will be emphasized as she routes certain pan-ethnic identity formations through blackness and Asia. However, the following section will provide a brief description of how self-identification and negotiated states of becoming also contribute to this movement.

NEGOTIATED STATES OF BECOMING

As previously outlined, the chronology and manifestation of the "x" is complex and interconnected with other structural forces. An important contribution to this conversation is how certain identity constructions are (re)negotiated based on certain ethnic and racial formations on both a pan-ethnic scale and specific racialized subjectivities. To better understand why and how certain sociolinguistic evolutions manifest in this specific context, Luis Urrieta's (2007) work will be implemented as a benchmark in the following conversation. Urrieta helps set the contextual landscape by grounding his theoretical practices in public education and provides a much needed crucial insight as to how lexicons become more than just a shift in vernacular.

Borrowing from the work of Holland et al (1998), one of Urrieta's central themes is that identity cannot be defined as a state of being. Rather, it is a state of constant becoming (Urrieta, 2007). By condensing identity production into cultural production and heuristic development, identity becomes a site for self-making. As he states in his work, being involved in certain critically conscious practices (for example Movimiento Estudiantil Chicana/o de Áztlan in his work) did not necessarily mean that a member would identify as Chicana/o. The multiplicity of sociolinguistic dimensions then can be better understood in certain contexts as to why some people may prefer, for example, Chicanx versus Xicanx or Latina/o versus Latin@. As terminological positionalities are both restrictive and self-defined, encased within historical eras, "ethnic [and racial] self-designation reflects the dialectics between dominance and self-determination" (Comas-Díaz, p.115, 2001). With "Chicano" not only embodying racialized intricacies, this term

is a socio-political consciousness that cannot be separated from its racialized deployment (Bernal, 2003). Further noting, Bernal (2003) explains specifically how Chicana feminist's ways of knowing are in relation and synchronization with collective experiences and community memory. In an atmosphere of convoluted colonial, racialized, and neoliberal regimes, Chicana/o students placed reliance on home knowledge that would serve as a counternarrative practice against hegemonic coercion (Bernal, 2003). This could also elucidate why people often times identify with the pan-ethnic construct of Latina/o to avoid being hispanized and its affiliation with Spanish conquest and ideological values (Comas-Díaz, 2001). As a result, many of these scholars pay particular interest to radical self-legitimizations especially in the context of a Chicana/o and Latina/o paradigm.

Even though there are strong theoretical Chicana/o and Latina/o fundamentals, current discussion has circled around the necessity to further our discussion on identity formation and politics calling for a more nuanced understanding (Vera & De Los Santos, 2005). Specifically limited is the complexities of being a queer Chicana/o that does not exist in the confines of nationalists and political movements that accentuate a singular identity (Misa, 2001). Specifically, incorporating sexuality as a central component, or axis of power, into the discourse of Chicana/o studies and not simply an additive component (Yarbro-Bejarano, 1999). Sexuality has often been neglected as a critical lens by only mentioning the contentions that it confronts instead of the dimensions that it traverses and eventually impacts. Looking through an educational lens, current class practices often reinforce a structuralist approach in explaining sexuality and gender

subjectivities (Misa, 2001). In order to dismantle these perpetuated states of conflict and violence, a conscious effort must be made in Chicana/o and Latina/o studies to contest these hegemonic scripts and work with the terms "Chicana and Chicano" as constantly producing identities (Yarbro-Berjarano, 1999). The reorientation of these areas of study towards an awareness of critical negotiation and nuance on the overlapping experiences of race, class, sexuality, culture, and gender, et al. in identity is imperative.

The deployment of the "x" then comes into interesting perspective as not only a sociolinguistic shift, but a negotiation and rooted call to action against certain oppressive systems. In certain circumstances, you have the "x" being implemented in a more indigenized context (Castillo, 1994; Rodriguez, 1996; Maiz, 1996) as you have it also vocalized as a call for gender and sexual inclusion (Aviña, 2016; Cisneros, 2016; Josh Logue Op-Ed, "Latina/o/x", 2015). Drawing from Urrieta's work on heuristic processes of identity and becoming, the popularity of the "x" is seen as one of the many ongoing negotiations of identity performance and construction. This is not the first time that language has been utilized in certain identity productions. In this case, the "x" has been on ongoing process that has shifted in various directions, but has manifested from a desire to fully recognize and express a certain part of an identity that is repressed by societal measures (Rodriguez, 1996; Maiz, 1996; Moraga 2011). With new technological advancements and the rapid growth of media usage, language is in a constant trance of metamorphoses. Even though not always academically defined, they are deployed often enough to have cultural, linguistic, and social value. In the next section, there will be more elaboration on the distinct differences and similarities between Chicanx and Latinx

and the interrelations between these terms and afro latinities. Both scholarly articles and media reports will be dialogued with in order to have the best illustration of these terms and their present day context.

LATINX AND CHICANX

Latinx and Chicanx can then be seen in certain contexts. Latinx as a pan-ethnic identity does not relate directly to Indigenous homage. Two recent articles have made their case for the "x" and its deployment in Latinx. One article, The argument against the use of the term "Latinx", goes through a series of, what they call, misguided attempts in the name of a degenderization movement(http://swarthmorephoenix.com/2015/11/19/the-argument-against-the-use-of-the-term-latinx/). The main critiques are: Latinx is simply a buzzword that fails to address any meaningful challenges in both the Spanish language and gender inclusivity, phonetic Spanish does not utilize the "x" as often so forcing its usage on Spanish is a form of language imperialism, Latinx is nonexistent outside the U.S., Spanish would not be spoken anymore if this transition happened, and there is already a gender inclusive term, Latino. Just as this article laid out their concerns and convictions, an equally expressive article articulated a response to exactly these opinions. In brevity, the authors in, "The Case FOR 'Latinx': Why Intersectionality Is Not a Choice", present a rebuttal for each of these concerns stating that Spanish is itself an imperial language and continues to be so, Latinx does not mean Spanish speaking (Brazil, Indigenous communities, etc), placing inconvenience over privilege, and the fruition of

this term in other South and central America countries and geographies. Both these articles dialogue with each other on the complexity and fairly new social movement.

This differs from the deployment of the Chicana/o "x" because as a Latina/o pan-ethnic identity, there cannot be a unilateral connection to one Indigenous identity. In this case, Mexica peoples would be emphasized with the Nahuatl language in Chicana/o conversation. Due to the fact that Indigenous acculturation was apparent during Spanish conquest, imperialist warfare, and even Indigenous osmosis pre-conquest, specific tribal affiliations are nearly impossible to distinguish (Maiz, 1996). These articles are actively shared on social media sites, and this platform creates a public-private space where people can share and exchange information about social mobilizing and activism (Harp, Bachmann, & Lei, 2012).

Even though never mentioned, the question about indigeneity does come into question. As presented throughout this paper, the sociolinguistic journey of the "x" in Chicana/o towards Chicanx, Xicano, Xicanx[16] is presented as a reclamation of certain ideological indigeneities, as a retaliation from the U.S. nationalist agenda (Castillo, 1994; Maiz, 1996; Rodriguez, 1996; Berta-Ávila, 2003; Moraga, 2011). Since these terms embody vastly different conceptualizations, one being pan-ethnic and one being a racial/politicized identity, it is convincing that the "x" must have manifested in different contexts. However, with the information that is provided here I would like to make an argument that in fact, the "x" can serve to be both a rooted Indigenous construct and a

[16] Note that these are not synonymous terms, nor did they come into context at the same time. For the scope of the paper, there is an underlying assumption that must be elaborated upon: variations of the "x" in chicana/o are inherently connected to indigenous genealogies and legacies.

commitment to the queer community by placing gender inclusivity at the forefront. The reason for this, as Rodriguez mentions "the Raza that have embraced the term Xicano, explain that contrary to the term Chicano it is gender neutral, or rather, that because it is a Nahuatl-based word, it is both masculine and feminine" (Rodriguez, p.47, 1996). Nahuatl is not necessarily a base for a social pan-ethnic construction, and it should not inherently be, since emphasizing Nahuatl could have the same romanticized nationalism users of the Chicana/o "x" are attempting to undo. Considering gender neutral is outdated and this was one of the few instances where gender fluidity was mentioned in earlier works that routed the "x" to such commitments, this still presents in interesting case for the deployment of the "x" in both a pan-ethnic and ethnoracialized global economy. Even though Latino as a pan-ethnic identity extends extensively through a multiplicity of geopolitical and sociohistorical locales, a critical interpretation of this idea is necessary. I purpose that the usage of the "x" does not necessarily have to be a mutually exclusive construction of gender inclusive or recognized indigeneity. In fact, I believe that the "x" can be gender inclusive, indigenously rooted, and possibly afro-constructed.

As previously mentioned, the scope of this chapter is not necessarily to fully engage within these tensions. The reason why I mention the possibility that the "x" can also incorporate the construction of a afro-genealogy is particularly because of the way in which the "x" has been sociohistorically and ethnopolitically situated. In other words, as the "x" receives traction in academic and contemporary discourses, so does the historical significance *and omission* of the deployment of such a construct. For example, scholars such as Anzaldua and Ana Castillo have (re)interpreted a *mestiza* consciousness that has

also catered to the way that the "x" has been implemented in the words Xicana and Xiacnisma. In the same token, we now realize that the erasure of black significance can be omitted from such a project and that this new push towards the "x" could mean something intricately different in the way that it is now being (re)imagined.

LIMITATIONS, CRITIQUES, AND FURTHER DIRECTIONS

Presented in this paper is a brief sociohistorical and geopolitical conversation on a movement that has rapidly emerged in the last couple years. The "x" has been catalyzed by social media and taken up by scholars and organizations. Much of what is presented online, relays information through social media networks and scholars have pointed out how these communicative tools play an active role in extending conversations across academic, informal, and casual dimensions (Harlow, 2011 & Harp, Bachmann, and Guo, 2012). However, social media should be objectively criticized as a double-edged sword as other studies have mentioned the inception of "slactivism" or "clicktivism" through social media networks (Harlow and Guo, 2014). Regardless, through the desire of a growing critical conscious and the convenience of social media, the "x" has been guided to the front of conversations.

One evident critique that arose while doing this investigation, was the lack of emphasis on specific racial scripts in a U.S. nationalist construction. Natalia Molina's book reroutes racial and ethnic constructions through racial scripts in a broader U.S. global economy (Molina, 2013). Specifically, she sets out to see how arbitrary accounts of immigration policy on a racialized group were actually relational to other accounts and

catered to those exact racialized subjectivities. Immigration policy and its implications on racialized constructions is imperative to take into account as well, since much transnational movement (broadly defined) places certain identity politics at the forefront of legal apparatuses. In further studies, Molina's study could be worked in conjunction with Milian's work on blackness and dark-browness to illuminate further the questions on ascribed ethnoracial identity formations.

Looking retrospectively, one can see the complexity that this movement has presented. With little scholarly work done in attempting to describe the fruition, goal, and future deployments of the "x", this short essay is to present a possible start for further investigation. Future directions that would need to be explained would be sociolingustic and anthrohistorical scripts on how africanness and the transpacific salve trade affected the Indigenous languages they came into contact with. Additionally, further explanation on certain terms such as Xicanx and muxer, still need concrete exploration in their inception and utility. Regardless, this linguistic evolution clearly demonstrates the necessity to keep evaluating shifting perspectives on the "x". As my mother always tells me when I need to get something done: Lxs que no se apuran, no se maduran.

CHAPTER V

The Dust in Our Stars

This chapter will take into full implementation the previously situated methodological inquiry that is autoethnography, alongside *listening to images* (Campt, 2017), and the theoretical contributions of refusal, desire (Tuck and Yang, 2014; Simpson, 2016; McGranahan, 2016), and futurities (Tuck and Gaztambide-Fernndez, 2014; Campt, 2017). This process was a challenge; I revisited questions and parts of my life that had been left untouched. Some parts filled my eyes with happiness, with gratitude, with fulfillment. Other times, my eyes swelled from the sting, the vulnerability, my lividness of what I decide to share. I believe in the kind of education that allows me to express such matters; not for your to read (Tuck and Ree, 2013), but for my own, for my parents, for my ancestors. If one is against these expressions, one then, does not recognize the right for me to express against "injustice, against disloyalty, against negation of love, against exploitation, and against violence [and] fails to see the educational role implicit in the expression of these feelings" (Freire, p.45, 1998). Below are some of my thoughts, my emotions, my relations, my contentions, my becomings. This piece is not made to be generalizable (Jackson and Mazzei, 2017) but has been selected to see the fragmentations, yet crystallized materialities, that can constitute precarious states of becoming.

So the question is then, how is it useful in the field of education? I believe this caters to what Freire mentions as a "pedagogy of autonomy", one in which its

experiences respect the freedoms of those "idealistic" envisioning's (Freire, 1998). I want to demonstrate how an autoethnographic venture, is not only an option, but should be seen as a necessary pedagogical and curricular tool to wrestle with the precariousness and liminalities of life, not only in students, but with teachers and educators. Not only autoethnography as a tool, but also how the theoretical underpinnings of this thesis that are refusal, desire, and futurities are situated within students, teachers, and educators' subjectivities. A contextual situatedness that does not gaze on the damage narratives (Tuck, 2009), allows for the more than human understandings (Kimmerer, 2013; Tuck, McKenzie, & McCoy, 2014; Smith, 2013; Nxumalo, 2017), to envision our own ideas of desire and futurities, to be justified in our expressions of anger, distrust, and anguish (Freire, 1998), and to disrupt the colonial extractive regime of academia and knowledge production. Through my autoethnographic venture, one can see how diasporas, (re)migrations, and acts of homecoming emerge from the assemblage of such conventions. By the same token, we can see how they are (re)imagined, contested with each other, nuanced, affirmed, and complicated.

I will share some aspects of my life in relation to my multidimensional particularities. Please take care of the few words I share with you here. These are dreams, memories, *consejos,* life reflections. I do not have much assurance that you will actually do so, but I ask you to read within, in between, through the center, and in the peripheries. Don't read too much into it though, this project was not necessarily made with you in mind. As Audra Simpson (2016) articulates this autoethnographic refusal " refused to be that thick description prosemaster who would reveal in florid detail the ways in which

these things were being sorted out… it was deliberate, it was willful, it was… very aware of its context of articulation" (p. 328).

LXS REGALOS/MEMORIA DE LOS ANCESTRXS

Desde el cielo una hermosa mañana (2)

La Guadalupana (2)

La Guadalupana bajó al Tepeyac.

La Guadalupana (2)

La Guadalupana bajó al Tepeyac.

-This song is in remembrance of my grandmother; she was known for this song; the song had chosen her to be its voice

I can remember that thunderous voice walking down her gravel driveway. Not even gravel, more like a carved path that el cerro gifted my grandmas home. La Reina del pueblo. Her voice is mine; I remember her when I sing, when I dream, when I look at the stardust in the water. I remember him, Pa Che', a Bracero in secret, a book with seams so full, a contagious humor that welcomes everybody. He knew the time to be with his life partner was near. This past year was the first time I had visited my mom's hometown of La Estancia, GTO without any immediate family. It was also the first time to be in my

mom's childhood home since both of my grandparents had been received back to mother earth. I roll up that same path from el cerro. The purple hues of those flowers that I recognize since I remember how to reason. They remember me. I see them closer, knowing that I must face an unknown idea of life without either, without saying goodbye. We park, I feel, they call. I know they are welcoming me, inviting me in for some arroz and mole. I accept. Take these lagrimas como mi ofrenda. *Grandma and Grandpa, dos ancestros que me cuidan.*

This always seems like an arduous task – how personal of an endeavor do I make my projects(?) Or better yet, does the academy deserve such knowledge (Tuck and Yang, 2014). As Tuck and Yang (2014) so profusely demonstrate, the university is a "colonial collector of knowledge" that perpetuates a continued epistemic violence through territoriality and dominance over stories and experiences. What does property look like, knowing that what I write sometimes will be claimed by others – does UT deserve my grandmother's words? Refusal is generative and hopeful and willful (McGranahan, 2016), so I hope that by expressing how I felt/feel *in relation* to her words, that I may do them service. I want to also use the conversations I have had with my parents, what I can remember from her life consejos. I am presented again with this daunting conditionality and particularity of mi ma's voice, in a propertied text. However, it is also my text, my mommas text, my family's text, my lineages text. By producing that which is not for me, but in relation to who I am and may be, that this which is constructed, this discourse and knowledge, traverses the dimensionality of power being a toxicity (Foucault, 1980), we

are producing for our sake of thriving, living; continuing for those who are coming, have lived before, and those who live among us.

I look at the picture below again, right now in this moment, I realized what was happening. This day some friends and I sang to my ancestors as the sun began to rest behind el cerro de Culiacan. A song that I never heard was sung "Nace la vida en esta tierra sagrada, nace la vida en esta tierra de amor… son flores, son piedras, son plumas preciosas que traen los regalos de los abuelos… son flores, son piedras, son plumas preciosas que tran la memoria de los abuelos". I would typically offer a translation in most other texts; however, this must stay in this way. I have been surveilled since I was young on my language, "a scientific gaze on [me] to ensure [I] learn language in a developmentally appropriate way - a Western, Eurocentric, English-speaking, middle-class way" (Demas and Saavedra, p.223, 2004) I hope to make this refusal into a translation of generative stance (McGranahan 2016) that pries open a conditionality of what must be done in order for sense to be made to those who are onlookers. Better yet, the necessity for me to feel obligated to translate is exactly the reason why I won't, which makes it the reason why it can become what it already is. Does this manipulation disrupt the binary in which it seems to constantly be situated in? Does it potentially pivot off a deconstructive resonance (Biesta, 2009)?.

Figure 4: *Nace la Vida*

I will share a dream: That night, my grandma visited me. Upright in her casket, I noticed that behind her was a huge flame - the sun. But in that flame, a mountain of flowers emerged.

A cascade, pouring all around her overflowing onto where she was. She loved her garden. I stay fixed, hoping that her visit isn't too short, she looks at me, with her eyes closed, and gives me a smile. I woke up with my eyes heavy and my pillow damp. I think dreams are in interesting quasi-reality, in that they facilitate this construction of reality through contingent axis of physical and metaphysical prisms. Dreams may transcend beyond both prisms; beyond what I think I know and what I think I want to know. Dream data (Koro-Ljungberg, MacLure, and Jasmine, 2017) allows for ongoing interpretations, but they also authorize "a complexity of meaning that science prohibits" (St. Pierre,

p.183, 1997). They manifest in a way where I am left in abjection/disillusionment, which sometimes become tears. My grandma is still demonstrating the power of these dimensional realities. I knew she was visiting me. I knew it, because I felt it. I knew that she was grateful of the songs we sang to them; that we paid homage to the beauty that was ancestor medicine. That those flowers, were also the ones that greeted me at her gate. She is alive for me.

A la montaña ya me voy; donde yo nací -- La Huasteca

The cerulean blue; the white ombre; those flowers by your *lavadero;* how you tended those flowers was how you tended to us; *lirio blanco;* Creator - bless me with this same patience.

Guardian of these lands, montaña bella, you are a beautiful reminder of the beautiful. Thank you for receiving me with your patience, you are my grandma. My eyes are heavy right now. Because I realize that I write sometimes what I cannot say, but know that I live and breathe. However, I will not give you all my words here, an act that is both "generative and willful… [the end of one thing] is the often the generation of something new" (McGranahan, p.321, 2016). And, I know how you will use it; you are the risk I will never take. I am now talking to you grandma, don't mind them. This is for you. You deserve nothing less:

*I walked and walked and noticed that those bushes looked/felt familiar. I see people walking behind them. I see a drum, I see a rattle, *go go go*. I must hurry. I catch*

*them as I turn the corner around the bush. And there you are in the horizon, Montaña, ancestrx, guardian de este lugar. I continue following the people that I see, and now I am walking behind them in a single file line. I know them; my beautiful friends. They're singing, playing their instruments, ready. But, there is someone right in front of me that I do not know. Do I know you…? She turns. It's an elderly women. A rebozo is covering her head, but I catch a glimpse of her effervescent silver hair. She is a beautiful elder, she can't open her eyes either, but she needs no eyes to know who I am/who I must be/who I can become/why I am here. She *looks*, notices me, and gifts me her warmth by smiling; al fin has llegado… si madre tierra (abuelita)... tu hijx ya llego.*

I know this dream was a gift, as much as it was a lesson. From my ancestors, from the earth, from Creator. Ya lo tengo todo. In order to start this anitcolonial project, one must reconfigure and locate our positions in relationship to the land (Calderon, 2016). This picture is more than an image, it is both "material and affective" in that it is a "diasporic connection that instantiated practices of attachment, belonging, and relation" (Campt, p.24, 2017). It "commands a different type of listening" (p.24).

Figure 5: *La Huasteca*

EL QUEHACER/CONTIGO

Growing up I would always get *fastidiado* by having to wake up early and do *el quehacer*. I recognized it like clockwork. Every Saturday and Sunday it would be the same in my house in Wisconsin. To the tunes of Marco Antonio Solis or El Grupo Mojado, those mornings were filled with all that house work. We knew… oh we knew... on hearing those songs that it meant we had to get up and fulfill those duties.

I dreaded the weekends because I would never be able to sleep in. Let me sleep, por fa. "*Como dice tu Pa' Che, 'El sol no espera a los huevones'*". Cutting the grass, washing the dishes, doing yard work, helping my dad build a WHOLE garage from scratch, were some of the few fun activities I would partake in.

I was so bitter one year that I spent the whole entire summer helping my dad build that damn garage. Every single day, even when he came back from working 12 hours

under the hot sun paving roads and sidewalks, he would come back and work on the garage for another three or four hours. *"No te vayas ir a ningún lado porque me vas a ayudar"*. Just let me be a teen, dammit, let me do teen things, like walk around the neighborhood because we had no car, or get a slushie at the corner store. Anything but this, please. *"Ya te dije que no!, como friegas"*. Fine. This attitude will come free with my help, then. There is such contention between academic conventions that they often feel irreconcilable with what I see as legitimate. Can't they see that our stories are our theories (Brayboy, 2005)? Stories are part of this *universidad de la vida* (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2017), it adds dimensionalities, multiprism contextualizations "it is a genealogy… the ecologies [that stories] bring with them, and most important the social DNA given by our parents that spell a compelling commitment to education and community" (p.6).

My dad. I dedicate so much to you. You have shown me how to walk a dignified path, to ground myself, be humble with what I have, embody selflessness in our actions, and most importantly, you gave my sisters and I a beautiful example of what it means to lay foundations with your life partner. *"Hijo, desde que he podido razonar, he pensado en ustedes."* How beautiful, cosmic, boundless, beyond imaginaries, is it, to live your life for ones you have never met. How does a 16 year old make such a journey, and think about a life, a family, and a way to give back what he physically does not have. "Un mundo donde quepan muchos mundos"[17]. You see this as desire, but recognizing the hardships, a "song about walking through the storm, a song that recognizes rather than

[17] http://www.geopolitica.ws/article/el-zapatismo-de-la-inclusion-en-la-nacion-al-mundo/

denies that pain doubtlessly lies ahead" (Tuck, p.419, 2009). I remember you telling me your migration story. I will not share it. I do not know who will come to appreciate it, or realize the power of such a narrative, so I will not take my chances. Stories like yours often become lost in translation, lost in analysis, or just… lost. "I am interested in only telling certain parts, untelling certain parts, keeping the bodies and the parts from becoming a settlement" (Morrill, Tuck, and Super Futures Haunt Quollective, p.3, 2016). You, along with my mom, are part of the spine, apa, you *are* what holds this thesis together. I pray and give thanks to my ancestors, to our ancestors, for blessing me with such magic; for being the medicine that has thrived for generations.

"Vas hacer el primer doctor de todo la familia Montes y García… no sabes el orgullo que siento por ti"

No.

You, my mom, mis abuelxs, mis ancestrxs, are the *real* the *true* doctors of philosophy. You kept that spirit aflamed. Amidst it all. You found a way to preserve what so many were trying to take. You stood firm, a trunk as strong as mountains, your roots so deeply ingrained. I may be the first to receive that title, but you all have marked this earth in ways that this title could never do. I am the son of a legacy of doctors. And one that now knows how to de *el quehacer.*

This reminds me of an activity we did in class one day, where we were asked to go outside in regards to the postmaterialist theoretical pieces of Barad and others. Maybe

I did this assignment wrong? But with a tree is where I felt most at ease. Fikile Nxumalo's (2017) helps me contextualize this although her work was with children. In that the geontological may be an "alternative [for] extractive place relations, and might be useful in thinking with... [other people-human] encounters in relation to geomaterialities of settler colonialism" (p.6). I ask grandmother tree if I can sit with her today, to ask for permission to hold space. I notice a tag. Looks like a label with numbers, telling me who she is. But, that's not her. That label doesn't belong. My eyes are fixed on it; wondering how it must feel to be labeled without being asked. I wonder how grandma tree feels, having its roots reach a road that shouldn't be. I wonder if tree asks these questions to her neighbor, a little tree overlooking the wall, maybe it has a better view of the road, noticing how we cross, why we cross, to where we may be going, or where we may have come from.

Does she ever get tired of looking at this orange building? I would… never really a moment of silence, seeing the burnt orange hue every day. Or maybe she sees underground, maybe her roots extend beyond what I can know and see. Maybe she's seeing way more than I ever will. "In some Native languages the term for plants translates to 'those who take care of us'" (Kimmerer, p. 229, 2013).The wind is chilly, I feel it brush me gently, this medicine is cold, a cold that reminds me of those lands that freeze but invite you with warmth. But I feel warm, ancestor tree is being patient with me today. She tells me to feel grateful for grandpa wind, he is cold today but will never abandon. I feel/see you.The rustling before me and how those tips of grass remind me I can be cold but so happy to move. I see a sewer near grandma tree. I close my eyes trying

to see what her roots see. I can't; and maybe she doesn't want me to see. "We don't obtain knowledge by standing outside the world; we know because we are of the world. We are part of the world and its differential becoming" (Barad, p. 185, 2007).

Another little relative just appeared on my sheet. Thanks for checking in I wonder how you may feel, as a wise teacher, to live alongside this sewer, a child's invention. Maybe you're happy and think we are growing before you, or maybe you realize that we have strayed too far, with a road saturated with lessons left unearthed. I wish I had tobacco to give you… But I realized in my little pouch that I have around my neck, that today I have a piece of copal. I don't think I remembered wearing this specific pouch by coincidence, and I know that me not knowing was part of this encounter with you grandma tree. (I dropped the copal before I took it all the way out. Thank you for accepting my gift and for your joy in receiving it). This is the *que hacer,* the work that must be done. The work that you wake up to every morning, and know you are obligated to do. *Por fin estoy entendiendo.*

THE HOME(COMING) OF BECOMING

It will be two years in November that I traveled to Standing Rock to stand with the water protectors. Who knew what would have developed since then. I thank Creator for that prayer. That calling; the push that led us towards something way larger than ourselves. As we sang, laughed, marched, protected, we felt the synchronicities beneath our feet. As someone who left my home, Wisconsin, which was not my land but a home

in which my parents gave life to me, home was a contingency; a plurality in my reality. Standing Rock shifted this cosmology. Home has become different, I have came home in different ways, can this happen/is this okay? As we often now see, social media and news sources will refer to Standing Rock as an epoch that ended. "The Standing Rock Protests Ending with a Whimper" as HeatStreet clearly exemplifies. However, Standing Rock[18] is not just a physical locality that happened in the past. It has transcended to much more than just a position within a temporal and spatial dimension. Linda T Smith (2013) helps us in our attempts to delineate. One of the projects that she mentions in her book is that of reframing or taking much greater control (I say all of it), over the ways in which Indigenous issues and social problems are discussed and handled.

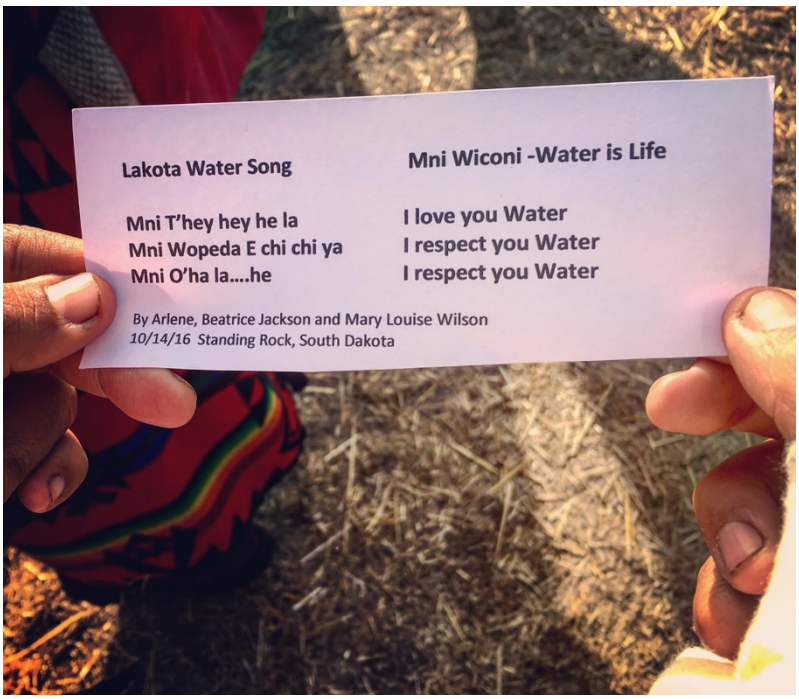

Figure 6: *Mni Wiconi*

[18] Cited from an unpublished paper in collaboration with colleague Marleen Villanueva *Pedagogies of Protection: Standing Rock as a Pedagogical Space* (Villanueva and Montes, 2017).

So instead of saying that Standing Rock was a site of protest, we are saying that this transformational space was one of protection, that catered to a pedagogical landscape that transcended past its physicality. One clear example of this is the creation of the International Indigenous Youth Council. This organization had its inception at Standing Rock because the youth comprehended the realities of the camp, and the necessity to build a coalition of Indigenous and Native youth in order to respond to the needs of the people and to fortify a youth-centered voice. Now we can see how the space that was Standing Rock, although physically displaced, has never been spiritually and emotionally dislocated. Tuck and McKenzie (2015) help in this contextualization of place "as beyond understandings of place as a neutral backdrop, or as a bounded and antiquated concept, or as only a physical landscape" (p.3). The lessons have transcended the physicality of that space, traversed the imaginary-realistic borders of nation-states, and have crystallized into a movement that is far from "ending". I see this act of home(coming) to be fascinating, because I am finding that my physicality, temporality, and spatiality, are constantly being reconfigured; as they should.

Abuelito, Abuelita, escucha mis palabras, de cariño, y amor. – Yana Wana

I once visited Austin, TX back in 2013 for my Spring Break to see a friend who was getting her Masters at the University of Texas at Austin. I road tripped all the way from Madison, WI to Austin, TX. As much as I despise driving long distances, I have come to know that I really don't. Driving long distances has become almost second

nature at this point from all the times my family would drive to Mexico up until I was 17. Maybe I try to avoid it purposefully; because I am reminded that I must also talk to myself, must console myself, know/love myself. I always get distracted too - the sunsets, the flowers, the meadows - I love rolling my windows down and feeling home. I was in Austin for a week, toured UT Austin, ate far too much, and relished my time. *No se, algo era diferente al regresar a casa*. I kept thinking about what my life would be if I lived there; *me ilusiono a veces o seria algo mas alla de lo que se entender*? Do you believe in coincidences? Am I becoming the subject within; Pacini-Ketchabaw, Nxumalo, Kocher (2010) help me navigate this as they explain through a sociomaterial perspective, that subjectivities are not simply a matter of language and discourse, but in mattering the matter (bringing into question the physical/the material) and the moments in which these encounters converge, collide, disintegrate, and/or transform between human and non-human bodies, affects, things, and discourses.

Anyway, I carried on with my studies, knew graduation was close, and that I had to decide where to go for graduate school. It so happened to be that UT Austin was my number one choice because the program in Cultural Studies in Education asked/was asking the questions I was eager to push. However, it so happened to be also the school that offered the least financial support. *Soy humilde; una de las fuerzas que me dieron mis papás/ancestrxs, pero se que tambien me imagino mas de lo que a veces tengo*. After multiple failed attempts to try and find support elsewhere, the University of Maryland - College Park was the obvious choice. I was pretty set on my decision to be quite honest, so, at the moment, I didn't know why I hesitated so much to finalize my acceptance.

CLICK THE BUTTON. I kept telling myself. *Pero no, era necio con hacerlo… o mejor, algo me estaba llamando que esperara un poco más… *tenme fe**... okay, I trust you.

Three days before I was to decide for Maryland, I get an email from UT Austin: "McNair Scholars Position Available". Wow, okay, this is really happening. I interviewed, was offered the position, and knew then and there, the road is being paved, the cosmos are aligning. I can't accept that these instances are mere coincidences. Am I living the future, now (Campt, 2017)? Please let me not make a huge mistake, I know Maryland is the safe choice, *pero estoy seguro que me llamas*. I know, I know, I know. Fuck it. Pa' ya voy, please let me be in good hands; please let me reach a home; please.

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I am meeting you, I thought.

Yana Wana | water of the spirit, spirit of the water

But, I didn't meet you that first trip I took back in 2013

You were welcoming me back home.

I let myself be guided, with doubts, an empty bank account, knowing no one

But, you can't meet someone who knows you before you knew

This is the home(coming) of becoming

I HOPE MY STINGS BRUISE YOU

"Settler colonialism destroys to replace" - Patrick Wolfe
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I sat there for a good amount of time getting email after email from you. In my mind, I was asking the right questions because I wanted this project to be the best that it could possibly be, since it was for students who were often overlooked. I was so excited for this new initiative, but also very naïve in my position as a student. My old university taught me a great amount, however it also left its mark on my psyche. I present this to you, carefully as I know this is a risk that I take. And even then, what does it mean that I have to preface with, "I present this carefully", as the same was not done from you to me? I digress. This part of my life was met with many doubts as a student organizer and what it meant for my labor and background to be at the backdrop and in the periphery, but present enough to be noticed. I give back to you a small piece of what you gave me that day, because I never asked nor ever wanted it. So here it is, finally, being unearthed, for you.

If you wish to derail a positive step in the right direction in the name of some sort of unknown process, bring this up at a meeting. But if you do so I will simply resign. This is about getting something done for needy students in an expeditious manner. I have limited time to waste and will not bother if there's going to [be] extended discussion of this. ***And you will not get anywhere on this without me****.*[19]

[19] Email Correspondence April 2015 with a Professor in regards to an initiative we were collaborating on.

Part of refusal is not only *not* saying as a generative stance (McGranahan, 2016; Simpson, 2016; Tuck and Yang, 2014), but to also say what those have told you not to, a refusal for freedom (Campt, 2017), one that articulates a possibility to live an unbounded life[20]. I wanted to put the whole email on here that I received back in April of 2015. Names and all, to be honest. But I am beyond the bitterness, and really, this is for me to finally put these feelings somewhere. Not you. Don't read this is as another angry queer, brown person being taken advantage of. I knew that this had happened. I am not asking for your sympathy, or empathy for that matter. Maybe I am not done with the bitterness. I am allowed this anger.

A white women professor sent me this when I questioned and disrupted her seat on the ivory tower. It must be nice. So far up. That you no longer see the land on which you stand, hear the voices of those that are at the bottom, and continue to build that empire with the books we have written for ourselves, not you. *La furia que tenía antes, llena de angustia, ventilada por nuestra explotación, ya no lo podía soportar*. This frustration is here, and you will listen to it, as you have silenced me.

Don't worry, I am done screaming. I am not damaged goods and I don't need your altruism. I am not broken. No need to come down. That seat is only temporary. Haunting is no stranger to people like you. Trust me. You are not writing this story about

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[20] Ruth Wilson Gilmore was cited in Listening to Images from Tina Campt (2017). Original citation: "Gilmore, roundtable comments, 'In the Wake of the Black Atlantic: Pedagogy and Practice,' The Black Atlantic @ 50 Conference, Center for the Humanities, cuny- Graduate Center, October 24, 2013, https://videostreaming.gc.cuny .edu/videos/video/1097/.
Campt, Tina M.. Listening to Images, Duke University Press, 2017. ProQuest Ebook Central, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/utxa/detail.action?docID=4816510.
Created from utxa on 2018-04-23 17:27:17."

me, so you do not get to claim a bitterness; you will not pathologize me (Tuck, 2009). This is not a story of pain or humiliation (Tuck and Yang, 2014), but one of desire (Simpson, 2016), of haunting (Tuck and Ree, 2013), of silencing some of the full text (Calderon, 2016) so that you can pull your weight to fill in those gaps. I have already done too much work for you.

Many professors have told me to forget about this. “That is just how she is”, “You don’t want to burn bridges by saying something that can hurt you later”, “It's not appropriate to write about it”. So what do I do with this, DISTASTE. Let me express it, finally, please, let me do this for me. Sit there and read this without feeling the need to tell me to frame it differently. Let the waters settle, it will do us both some good. This is why I distrust academia; you have been so violent towards me. I cannot change you, but at least I can haunt you. Sit there and take it. I did and you said nothing.

Heal~

EL JOTITX ESE

How do I (re)imagine my queerness; in relation to diaspora; in relation to migrations; to home; to you.

Cuando vayas pa ya [México], no seas…. así

-Como?

Pues asi, no seas alguien que… no eres

I don't mind being called a faggot, or a fairy, or a princess, or a queer. What stings, then? That I can maybe be(come), here, but not there? This queer terrain feels emotions too and these identities cry (Urrieta, 2007). So why do you insist in making gender and sexuality, a demilitarized zone now turned vacant; one that we cannot enter (Stewart, 2017)? Isn't *aya* also here? Why can't *aya* be there? How queer am I *aquí si aya no puedo - o aya si puedo, pero aquí no se?* It is not the place that says no to me, the land knows me, I know it knows. I feel it knowing. Then whom does not know me, if not the land?

Es por tu bien

How is it every time when I get to Mexico, I feel this tension, but feel so at home, more home than I ever feel (?) Can I feel at home and estranged at once (?) Can they cohabitate (?) I don't live here, I have gone elsewhere to live (?) Can I no longer say I am going home, when home is too many places (?) "Can I do this and still come home; what am I revealing here and why? Where will this get us? Who benefits from this and why?" (Simpson, 2007, p. 78).

I look at the *cerro* that lies in front of my house in La Luz, Guanajuato, Mexico. *El cerro de Culiacan.* I see how the stars hug you at night. They let you know you are accompanied. You have watched me grow; have seen me reason; have welcomed me

home year after year. I always remember that I would look for you as we were driving back to those/our lands; I knew that on seeing you, we are close; *un poquito mas*.

We once drove all the way to the top. *La punta del cerro,* as we like to say in our rancho. I realized at the top, as I was feeling that horizon, that you are taking care of all these relatives: the other ranchos, *las presas,* the trees, the fields, *mi familia, mis abuelitxs, mi casita, yo...* You call us back to you. Both a relationship of reciprocity and lasting memory, and a law of life (Kimmerer, 2013). I know that *puedo ser así, aquí, aya, contigo, con nadie, siempre, sinceramente, libre - en esta existencia, que somos todxs.*

Tlazocamati cerritx lindx. I don't have sourness about feeling estranged. I grasp now, that you are not the reason. *Perdoname*. It was maybe that I allowed myself to believe in this estrangement, one that has been meticulously and intentionally created in an attempt to contain the freedom of this queer self. Those words earlier may have left a sting, but *con un poquita de saliva y la cabecita de un cerillo, mezclado,* I rub both where the mark was left to ease the pain. But to ultimately understand que *SI voy hacer asi, alla como aqui. Siempre. Por todos lados y con gusto. Ese jotitx que no se cayo.*

YOU ARE A PRAYER MANIFESTED; A LEGACY NEVER RESTED; A SONG UNATTESTED

"Over 50% of our children in the schools are Native children. They are Indigenous children with rich, powerful, and beautiful legacies" – Ms. Maria Rocha, a Coahuiltecan elder and a founding member of the Indigenous Cultures Institute[21]

[21] This was not a direct quote, but one that I remember Maria saying that at the start of the camp

This past summer I had the honor and privilege to work alongside the Indigenous Cultures Institute, lead by Dr. Mario Garza and Maria Rocha of the Miakan/Garza Band, on an Indigenous centered youth camp. The Purpose of the Summer Camp is to "teach youth through a holistic pedagogy that is based on the values of their Indigenous heritage. These Native American values promote responsibility to their family, community, and environment, supports finishing high school, encourages enrollment in higher education, and results in positive contributions to society. This contribution includes stewardship of Mother Earth in addressing environmental issues, which we stress during their trip to Spring Lake to visit our sacred springs. This educational program is unique in using Native American arts, taught by Native artists, to transmit knowledge that will help these youth to succeed in school and in life. We target Hispanics from the local school district, but all youth from any background are accepted in the program and everyone benefits from this special way of learning"[22].

A colleague and dear friend of mine, Marleen Villanueva and I drafted a version of a curriculum for this summer camp. Upon co-constructing this curriculum, we realized that the entire summer camp is a week-long ceremony. We acknowledge that each of the instructors have a gift, and through ceremony, we noticed that the gifts complemented each other beautifully. All the lessons we had planned were manifested at the end of the camp where Maria Rocha led a water ceremony. The art, danza, writing, theater, and

[22] This description was taken from the Indigenous Cultures Institute website.

songs culminated to this ceremony where we gave gratitude to the water[23], and in return the water heard our prayer and intention to have a program where students could reconnect with their Native and Indigenous roots (Villanueva and Montes, 2017)[24]. The spring where we had our final ceremony was Aquarena Springs in San Marcos, TX where the creation story of the Coahuiltecan people takes place. It is not enough to just recognize this place as a backdrop of the work that we were doing at the summer camp (Tuck and McKenzie, 2015), or that land is just "... a site upon which humans make history or as a location that accumulates history" (La Paperson, p., 2014). Place is just as complex as us, in that it is "the thread that links these theories (new materialisms, Indigenous theories, spatial theory, critical and comparative geographies)" (Tuck and McKenzie, p., 2015).

Schools can oftentimes be vehicles of invisibilization and marginalization of different forms of knowledge and learning, by enforcing static curricular agendas, hyper credentialing, and omission of certain his/her/theystories. Going even further, we often internalize and legitimize concepts and conditions that have been created by society without having the opportunity to contemplate their coercion and purpose for existing. We have the ability to create and construct a world that fits other worlds; one where we know many truths. By allowing students the opportunities to know these many truths, and in that the lies in which these truths were concealed, the next generations will have the

[23] *Yana Wana, Spirit of the Water*

[24] Curriculum created by Marleen Villanueva and Pablo Montes

opportunity to keep asking these important questions.

I don't want to fill out the survey

Why not?

Because it asks for my race, and that's racist

Why is that racist?

Because I am black and white, and they don't have that on here

Colonialism has been so destructive that it has catered to an affinity for nationalistic internalizations and an ontological divergence from our Native and Indigenous ways. We tell the students that they are Native because many have been first detribalized, and then racialized by not only political regimes but coercively through the school systems. They are Indigenous because their ancestors prayed that one day they would be able to say that again. Many of them are eager to learn how to play the drum when we teach them songs, remembering that their ancestral DNA has never really forgotten the rhythm that the drum matches with their heartbeat. Or when a student talks about their *abuelita*. A student's grandma's stories are legitimate because it is their genealogy and within those stories lie the truths to who they are, their familial legacy, and the wisdom of generations. That is why we encourage parents and guardians to participate in this summer camp as well. In hopes to transcend a student to teacher pragmatic towards one of communal collaboration and storytelling.

This summer camp, although only one week, has given me an opportunity to reconcile with unattended questions. Upon hearing the words of Maria Rocha and Dr. Mario Garza, I also reflect/refract/diffract upon myself. *Do you really mean those words you said?* I too, come from this legacy? I cannot deny my pulse or heartbeat, when the drum plays. I cannot deny my cells vibrating at the smell of copal. I cannot deny my grandma's visits I receive in my dreams. The young people of this camp have learned beside me. As I come to terms with a memory I thought was never mine, I am reminded of this reciprocity; that I must give back to those young ones, even though I may not know much. What more beautiful act can one see unfold than elders, adults, and youth, becoming together. I have much work to do, but I hope that my life duties contribute to those next generations so that one day they can say they are Indigenous, because they were a prayer that manifested. A legacy that was buried, but that never rested. And a song that has been sung for millennia, although unattested.

CHAPTER VI

Conclusion

As I worked through this overall project, I was left to navigate certain unattended parts of my past, present, and future. By unattended I mean aspects of my subjectivities that were left unnoticed, pushed to the side, desired, hoped, and buried. I often times sat at a coffee shop, with eyes swelling up (re)remembering my grandparents, being frustrated with the things I have not let go, and realizing that I do not know much or that the direction I was hoping to go in is actually unclear, but I felt it is right at this moment. I battled with what parts to share, what parts to refuse, and in what way I wanted to frame my experiences, knowing that many of which are in relation to home, my family, and to the land. I realized that the process in creating this work was just as important as the actual final thesis. As I entered these conversations of diasporas, homecomings, and migrations, it became (un)clear what my becomings were and are, and that this is the beauty of this type of work; in the work of precarities and uncertainties. An elder whom I know once told me "*No importa tanto lo que sabes, si no lo que sientes"*. In heeding the words of my elders, I went along with the process and trusted that whatever came to fruition was what needed for me continue to do the work that I hope to do.

Throughout this thesis you have seen different approaches to writing and expressing. By incorporating narratives, oral histories, images, and life stories throughout this project, I hope to have demonstrated how autoethnographic work invites a different type of relation, and requires a different type of listening in order to capture what is being presented. I have invited you into some of parts of my experiences and life moments, but

have refused to share other parts or give more details. By tracing and retracing, and re remembering, and reconstituting, certain parts of my migrations and homecomings, I was able to see the ways in which these processes have allowed me to (re)envision a journey, a diaspora, and a home. How my grandma still shifts my orientations and subjectivities even though she has been physically gone, and visits me in what others call ordinary parts of life, such as my dreams. Or the seemingly ordinary conversations that I have with my parents about our family and our migrations are part of the reasons why I have become/continue becoming. There are parts where I acknowledge the pain, not because I see myself as pathological, or in need of rescue, but because those are the ghosts (Tuck and Ree, 2013) that roam these pages, these bindings, and that are not meant to be ignored.

One large part of this piece is exactly that it was not designed, nor meant to later, have some type of generalizability. Meaning, that the core purpose of this work is not necessarily to answer the questions I provided earlier, but to engage in the complexities that surround those questions, and to be left with more questions than with what I began. In that, by working with my data throughout my thesis, I attempted to create new assemblages and vignettes of possible new ways to become "as theories interlink, intensify, and increase territory" (St. Pierre and Jackson, p.717, 2014). I would like this work to stand and invite in the liminial subjectivities, the mundane yet imperative, and the constant becomings that have no finalized destination. Even though there is no clear guideline to how to go about doing this work, that there is imperativeness in the act of doing such qualitative inquiry. So what good does this type of work do in education, if it

does not necessarily point to clear implications and or clear methodological approaches to the ultimate goal of creating a liberating and radically free education and schooling experience?

I believe that the most direct implication I can offer with this type of work is first for educators and teachers on a type of curricular project. One clear example I can present is when students return back to Mexico for the holidays, yet are seen as truant and absent because they are not receiving educational attention when they go back home (Urrieta and Martinez, 2011). These conversations on absenteeism are clear examples of where such an autoethnographic invitation can lead to critical onto-epistemic realizations. Instead of putting blame on students for leaving school to go back to Mexico, why not take this opportunity to introduce an opportunity to not only create a critical engagement with thematic conversations on diasporas, homecoming, and migrations, but in the same gesture, demonstrate that these oral traditions, histories, and memories are legitimate theoretical contributions. In the era of hyper credentialing, standardization, and neoliberal regimes of power, discourse, and knowledge, these endeavors may prove extremely difficult to pursue given the restrictions that many educators and teachers must endure within schools and education.

However, my second suggestion would also be for educators and teachers to engage in the curricular project as mentioned previously, for themselves. How might the subjectivities of teachers and educators shift, transform, affirm, and/or validate through experiential processes such as the one I was able to partake in on this project? I especially think about teachers who may be considered Mexican, Mexican American, Hispanic,

Latinx, Indigenous, etc. How might this type of work encourage educators and teachers from these backgrounds to critically engage in these conversations, although many may already do, but to further complicate oneself in relation to community, others, and land? Some scholars may call this project that I presented post-qualitative inquiry even though I am personally not a self-identifying post-qualitative scholar. The reason for this is simply do to the way in which many Indigenous and Native scholars have nuanced post-qualitative work and its operationalization and in the way that it has been contextualized. As mentioned in my methods section, I do not fully enter into this post-qualitative methodological discipline as I recognize the limitations and possibilities of perpetual settler totalizing discourses of power, place, and knowledge.

The goal of post-qualitative work does, however, provide some promising starts in where qualitative inquiry can go although not free from critical observation. I hope to continue doing this type of research and investigations in order to continually position and reflect upon what is needed, because my ultimate goal is not for myself but for my parents, my ancestors, and for those who are yet to come. I want to give back, as I was given the countless gifts that keep me going today. I thank you again Creator, for allowing me to write in this way and I hope I do those who are dear to me service in the way that I express my experiences. Thank you Yana Wana for being so kind to invite me back again and again, so that I can learn from you and continue on with the work that lies ahead. And thank you ama y apa, for giving me the strength of humility. To recognize that these feats are not mine alone; that my ancestors prayed for this exact moment to happen. Little pabs dreamed of being an astronomer. Little did I realize that the stars

never gave up on me; they saw a poor, queer, boy looking up and asking questions, and I realized that this is a part of their answer. I have everything, because I was gifted everything. Mi familia had been guiding me for generations. I know this endeavor is never for me, but for those who are yet to come; because I know that I am my ancestor(s prayers).

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Creator. With all that I am, With all that there is, With all that will ever be.
Ancestors. A legacy that was left and will continue.
Land. I am a guest. I ask permission.
Family. My heart, my spine, my feet, my world.

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